



Encounters with sustainability in Tasmania: An interpretive inquiry

by

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Abstract

Critical discourses of sustainability challenge modern rhetoric of economic growth and challenge current modes of social development. Yet sustainability discourses are shaped predominantly by the perspectives and interests of middle class, tertiary educated, urban policy makers or environmentalists and have insufficiently engaged people beyond these cohorts, even in the advanced-capitalist societies where they have originated. In this study, I investigate how people who are not strongly engaged with sustainability discourses understand and engage with many of the underlying concerns that animate these discourses from the context of their situated, everyday experiences. I draw upon Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field, and capital to design a qualitative study in Tasmania, Australia to explore how situated knowledges inform interpretations of sustainability across diverse social locations. The inquiry engages people from a range of socio-economic and cultural backgrounds and life stages, using focus groups and semi-structured interviews. I investigate how particular located subjectivities inform interpretations and practices relating to what it means to aspire to and live sustainably. Focusing on spatial practices, I show that necessities for daily living look different in diverse social contexts, thereby influencing what represents sustainable living. Focusing on temporal practices, I show how future-oriented perspectives influence how and when diverse understandings of sustainability are enacted.

The findings provide insight into the ways in which people who are disengaged from discourses of sustainability may be actively engaged in practices of sustainability. The findings also provide practical guidance for environmentalists and policy makers concerning how current discourses of sustainability reflect specific

social contexts and experiences. Greater understanding of the effects of universalist accounts of sustainability, in particular social contexts, may enable advocates of sustainability to engage more effectively with others living outside urban, middle class social worlds.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

I embarked on this research to hear and explore stories of sustainability that were not being told in the discourses¹ of sustainability with which I was accustomed in the social contexts I was immersed. Although the concerns which arise from today's sustainability discourses are of relevance to everyone, these discourses belong to certain socio-cultural and historical contexts that may not be universally inclusive or generalisable across contexts (Castro, 2004; Macnaghten & Urry, 1998; Plumwood, 2002). The challenge of confronting sustainability in the 21st century is undeniably a global one, but one that will be different in different social locations.

¹ My interpretations of the term 'discourse' are informed by Gee (2011, 2015) who describes it as the language, symbols, interactions, values and beliefs that combine and create certain identity positions. Gee (2015) differentiates between 'big D' and 'little d' discourse and claims that 'big D' discourses are the language and "other stuff" that "can get people identified as having certain socially significant identities" (2015, p. 2). 'Little d' discourses are the processes of interpretation that occur in the use of language. In the context of hegemonic sustainability, a person who owns a takeaway coffee cup, rides a bike and talks about reducing their energy use, has a profile that aligns with membership of a socially significant group (which I claim reflects identity positions common to neoliberal sustainability discourses) (Gee, 2011).

Gee (2015) argues that discourses are powerful in the ways that they define the way that people who engage with them, 'act', 'do' and 'be'. In my study, I report on the ways that 'big D' discourses are interpreted (the little d) by people in diverse social locations and while I do not apply Gee's theorisation of discourse in any strict sense, in my analysis I am critical of the ways that hegemonic sustainability discourses encourage certain ways of 'doing' and 'being' in the identity positions that they afford (Gee, 2011, 2014).

Interest in sustainability and sustainable development began shortly after World War II, fuelled by growing environmental health related concerns, visible and invisible pollutions, as well as the depletion of natural resources including species loss across the globe (Macnaghten & Urry, 1998; Meadows, Meadows, Randers & Behrens, 1972; World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). Sustainable development was declared a priority for countries around the world to pursue as a national policy agenda at the Brundtland Commission in the late 1980s. A definition of the term reached consensus through a purposively broad definition: “Humanity’s...ability to make development sustainable to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”, known from here on in as the Brundtland definition (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, p. 15). Since this time, there have been varied attempts to incorporate sustainability into the policy landscape, although these attempts have privileged an environmental interpretation of sustainability (Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, 2009). Discourses of sustainability have also extended into the public sphere. Individuals and communities are encouraged through sustainability to reduce their impacts on the environment (Dryzek, 1997; Macnaghten & Urry, 1998; Okereke, 2006). Actions encouraged include recycling resources, sustainable or ethical consumption practices, purchasing solar panels, buying local products and composting at home and so on (Australian Government, n.d.; Castro, 2004). While each individual action reduces environmental impacts, environmentally sustainable actions are yet to be successfully embedded in all domains of society (government, business and the private sector) and socially and economically sustainable activities are yet to be meaningfully attempted.

Discourses of sustainability have largely emerged from advanced-capitalist societies representing, middle class tertiary educated, urban perspectives (Castro, 2004; Foucault, 1982; Middlemiss, 2014; Plumwood, 2002), despite recognition that inclusivity of the whole community is needed in creating solutions to problems of unsustainability (Berlach & Chambers, 2011; Fischer & Black, 1995; Gough, 2014). I position these discourses in two discrete but overlapping framings: critical discourses, denoting ways of thinking made prevalent in the 1950s to 1970s; and neoliberal discourses, signalling ways of thinking that began to emerge during the 1970s and have since become prevalent in global discourses. Neoliberalism is a concept used to describe an economic system that has origins in the 1970s and 1980s (Saad-Filho & Yalman, 2010). It differs from previous forms of capitalist economic systems, in its extension of the ‘free’ market system into public and personal worlds (Birch, 2017). Neoliberalism encompasses “the transformation of the state from a provider of public welfare to a promoter of markets and competition” (Birch, 2017, para. 4). Harvey (2007) suggests that within the neoliberal paradigm, wellbeing is assumed to advance best by institutional frameworks within a free market, divulging the state of responsibilities for all things, including health care, education, land and water. Neoliberalism is a powerful idea and has become a paradigm of thinking. Later in Chapter 4, I argue that within the context of this study, a neoliberal doxa operates.

These two positionings, described in this thesis as critical discourses and neoliberal discourses, are noted in the literature (Anand & Sen, 2000; Blewitt, 2009; Harris, 2003) and treated recently at length by Gough (2018) where she discusses the differences between the terms, sustainability and sustainable development. When considered together, I term these hegemonic discourses of sustainability. To date,

little research has been undertaken to explore the experiences of sustainability across a diversity of social locations. This is the work of this research.

Through qualitative methods, I explore how sustainability is interpreted and practiced across a range of social locations. In particular, I explore concepts of sustainability with people who are not engaged in hegemonic (dominant understandings and expressions) sustainability discourses. I illustrate that many people perceived as disengaged from hegemonic discourses of sustainability (Middlemiss, 2014; Plumwood, 2002) are, in many ways, actively engaged in practices of sustainability. Yet, the initial impetus for my interest in this research project came from my personal experiences in teaching sustainability in diverse educational settings and it was through an introduction to a new education setting that it became clear to me there was some mismatch in dominant discourses and practices of sustainability.

1.1 Background to the Research: Working and Teaching for Sustainability

I had been working and teaching sustainability in a university context in various roles, including as a Sustainability Officer and as a tutor in the geography discipline for more than five years when I was approached to teach a Vocational Education and Training (VET) environmental sustainability unit. This was the first time I had taught outside of the university system. The environmental sustainability unit was a compulsory subject for students completing tourism and hospitality qualifications in an institution of technical and further education.

I began this course in a similar way as I had in my teaching practice at the University, by asking the class: “What does sustainability mean to you?” The first

time I asked this question in the VET unit, the response I received was complete silence in a room full of blank expressions. As I prompted for some ideas, comments were made such as, “We’ve never even heard of sustainability – that’s something to do with trees isn’t it?” As we progressed through the course material, I soon realised that my interpretation and experiences of sustainability were different to the people in the room; yet, the students’ descriptions of the personal anecdotes and practices that were relayed in response to the course material aligned with many of the principles of sustainability I was teaching. For example, one student had noted that they were not able to car pool (which I had mentioned) because they always caught the bus, “I’ve never had a licence,” she said. This experience was a moment of awakening for me. The people I had been working with in the VET sector did not share the same language as me, but they were doing something that resonated with the concepts that were at the core of my sustainability speak. I began to wonder; *are sustainability professionals and scholars missing something here? What discourses of sustainability are privileged and consequently, what discourses are silenced? What discourses of sustainability was I privileging and why had I thought that it was a shared language?* This experience was the beginning of my research journey.

1.2 Research Problem

It is widely accepted that sustainability discourses have been exclusive to particular social fields and they do not necessarily translate or appeal across other social fields (Castro, 2004; Dryzek, 1997; Macnaghten & Urry, 1998; Plumwood, 2002; Redclift & Springett, 2015). Because of its situated history and context emanating from predominantly tertiary educated, urban, middle class policy makers and environmentalists (Dryzek, 1997; Plumwood, 2002), recognition of sustainability

is underpinned by particular discourses that define and frame what it means to be sustainable. The exploration of ways of doing sustainability that may sit outside of this discursive frame is therefore of interest to environmentalists and policy makers, given their commitment to moving the agenda of sustainability forward. In this research, I explore the ways that people perceived as disengaged from hegemonic sustainability discourses understand and embody underpinning concepts of sustainability in their lives.

This is not a new concern and some sustainability scholars (Middlemiss, 2014; Plumwood, 2002) have expressed unease that discourses of sustainability are exclusionary. Indeed, people in very different social fields engage in, and/or disengage from, sustainability discourses in different ways but in many cases have the same concerns (as those expressed in sustainability discourses) regarding the future, or interest in future generations, or in non-human value (Kelly & Coggan, 2007; Macnaghten & Urry, 1998). Discourses of sustainability have also been critiqued for privileging Western scientific knowledge by delegitimising certain people from participating through the prerequisite knowledge required to speak into them (Brulle & Pellow, 2006; Davison, 2009; Redclift, 2005; Redclift & Springett, 2015). Others argue that sustainability discourses have emerged out of fields of power, such as politics or business, that imperceptibly forward the interests of these fields, as shown through national reports and policy agenda-setting regarding questions of sustainability and sustainable development (Dryzek, 1997; Macnaghten & Urry, 1998).

Although there is a growing body of research on local practices of sustainability (such as recycling behaviour), an examination of how sustainability concepts are embodied in people's lives across a range of diverse social locations in

an advanced-capitalist context has yet to be undertaken. It is not known, for example, whether concepts of sustainability are already practiced in people's lives in socially located ways; in other words, in ways that are reflective of and reflected by age, gender, habitat, histories and experiences and so on. Much research focuses instead on the uptake or improvement of practices that promote hegemonic accounts of sustainability (Edwards, 2013; Buckley, 2013; Kibert, 2016; Knibb & Taylor, 2017). A small body of research is challenging the transferability of hegemonic sustainability discourses across social fields in a way that acknowledges and respects the situated knowledges of these fields (Aiken, 2017; Aiken, Middlemiss, Sallu & Hauxwell-Baldwin, 2017; Baeten, 2000; Middlemiss, 2014). However, there is very little research on how concepts of sustainability are translated and taken up in different social contexts (Middlemiss, 2014). There is also little research on the ways in which hegemonic sustainability discourses are encountered in diverse social contexts located in advanced-capitalist settings. What little research there is does not address issues of power, nor does it explore the extent to which hegemonic discourses of sustainability impose particular discursive positionings, visions and imaginaries of what it means to live sustainably. Neither does it examine the hierarchies of knowledge that are privileged or marginalised, or the tensions between situated knowledges and hegemonic discourses nor how these potentially influence the way sustainability discourses are encountered. These deeper issues go to the heart of Middlemiss' (2014) concern "that there is a pressing need to explore late-modern subjectivities in order to understand better how (and, indeed, if) the ideals of participation for sustainable development can be achieved" (p. 931). This is a significant gap that my research begins to address.

1.3 Research Aims and Research Question

Many sustainability scholars argue that there is a need to understand the experiences of sustainability from multiple subjectivities (Dryzek, 2013; Macnaghten & Urry, 1990; Middlemiss, 2014). In this research, I am interested particularly in how interpretations of concepts of sustainability are reflected in and responsive to socially located situated knowledges. In doing so, I aim not only to explore socially located experiences of sustainability, but also to inquire into how hegemonic sustainability discourses (do not) reflect diverse subjectivities. Indeed, as some scholars would argue, sustainability discourses are made predominantly by and for tertiary educated, middle class policy makers or environmentalists (Baeten, 2000; Castro, 2004; Luke, 1995; Middlemiss, 2014). The aim of this study is to investigate the experiences and meanings that concepts of sustainability have for people across diverse social contexts and to address concerns that discourses of sustainability have not included multiple subjectivities (Middlemiss, 2014). My hope is that this will inform how transitions toward sustainable futures can be achieved across diverse social locations.

Specifically, the objectives of the research are:

1. To explore how social location influences encounters with concepts relevant to sustainability.
2. To explore how social location influences encounters with hegemonic sustainability discourses.

While insights generated from my localised research cannot be generalised, they may nonetheless be transferable to other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1986), and may assist international, national and local stakeholders in ensuring that sustainability discourses are culturally specific, flexible, adaptable and relevant to participants.

The key research questions for this study are therefore:

- 1) How do people from different social contexts describe/conceptualise concepts of sustainability and how are they embodied in everyday lives?
- 2) How does social location influence approaches to questions of sustainability?
- 3) How do people from different social contexts engage with discourses of sustainability?

1.4 Theoretical Framework and Methods

My research is informed by Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical concepts. Bourdieu pays attention to socially located knowledges through his theories: *doxa*², the undisputed and undiscussed elements that order social life and inform how and why individuals understand and perform in particular ways; *habitus*, the everyday social practices constructed and embodied in individuals; *capital*, the economic, social and cultural resources of individuals; and *field*, specific social locations in time and space (Bourdieu, 1984, 1990a, 1990b). I also draw on Bourdieu's notion of 'necessity' to make sense of how participants came to think about and prioritise activities in their lives³. Bourdieu's concepts provide a framework for exploring interpretations of

² A fuller description of the concept is included on pages 66-67.

³ Bourdieu (1984) thought about the meeting of basic needs through his conceptualisations of necessity. "Habitus is a virtue made of necessity...Social class is not defined by a position in the relations of production, but by the class habitus which is 'normally' associated with that position" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 372). Bourdieu's interpretation acknowledges the positioning of the individual and their perception of what is a necessity in their life. This is in contrast with Maslow's theory of needs (1958) (for example) that is an objective truth with relevance to all people regardless of social location. It is Maslow's interpretation that is most commonly used to describe what is essential for living, such as UN classifications of absolute poverty. While I acknowledge the relevance and importance of understanding absolute needs, in this thesis I am interested in the *perceived* necessities of participants and how these influenced encounters of and with sustainability. As I go on to describe, many of the participants suggested that they were driven by necessities in their lives, which were dependent on the perspectives and values of the individuals themselves.

sustainability from located but agentic social actors and for critiquing the transferability of hegemonic sustainability discourses across social fields. Only recently has literature begun to question the applicability of discourses of sustainability to people located across social fields (Aiken, 2017; Aiken, Middlemiss, Sallu & Hauxwell-Baldwin, 2017; Baeten, 2000; Middlemiss, 2014; Plumwood, 2002). Bourdieu's theories provide a useful means of exploring how people engage with and are located in hegemonic sustainability discourses through his analysis of the variables and relations between people and their environments. Such theories are therefore helpful in exploring how situated knowledges of social contexts inform interpretations of sustainability concepts.

This research locates sustainability in concepts representative of questions and concerns about how to lead and/or continue leading a good life in a particular place and time. As noted by Ott (2003) in *The Case for Strong Sustainability*, “sustainability means that present and future persons have the same right to find, on the average, equal opportunities for realising their concepts of a good human life” (p. 60). In this way, sustainability is discursively positioned as constituting what it means to live and aspire towards a good life, noting, that this is subjective and contestable. In this research, understandings of the ‘good life’ are located in an advanced-capitalist context.

Some scholars assert that broad level agreement is possible on constitutions of sustainability. Dobson (1999, p. 26) thinks about this in terms of conceptual levels. The first level encompasses core ideas and values, to which agreement is possible, while the second level involves how these concepts should be implemented and operationalised. Agyeman and Evans (2004) support this assumption and go on to suggest the areas where agreement is possible, including questions and concerns

pertaining to the environment, to futurity, to equity and to quality of life. They take up the discourse of ‘just sustainability’, which reflects a balanced approach that encompasses justice, equity and environment together. They argue that this trio of concerns is missing, and at best implicit, in the Brundtland conception of sustainable development (Agyeman & Evans, 2004; Jacobs, 1999). It is not my intention to define sustainability; this work has been done repeatedly for decades now. Instead, I use Agyeman and Evans’ (2003, 2004) organising principles as guiding concepts of sustainability. In what follows I provide a summary of the concepts.

1.4.1 Sustainability Guiding Concepts

Environment

Discourses of sustainability have originally developed in response to problems of unsustainability of the physical environment. Mainstream media is filled with discursive messages regarding the declining health of natural areas around the world. For example, over 7,000 ha/yr of forest is lost to deforestation globally, with 17% of the Amazon forest deforested in the last 50 years (Food and Agriculture Organisation, 2005; World Wildlife Fund, 2017). The number of species threatened by extinction continues to rise globally across animal groups (International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, 2017). Statistics and empirical evidence of ever-concerning environmental degradation have now become a common occurrence in mainstream discourses, although that is not to say that these concerns do not remain points of contestation in political discourses (Boykoff, 2011; Sampei & Aoyagi-Usui, 2009; Schmidt, Ivanova & Schafer, 2013).

The environment has been constructed through dominant discourses to exist outside of the human world. Various sustainability models have been developed

showcasing this assumption (such as the nested model, the 3-legged stool, ‘mickey mouse’ model, among many others [Mann, 2009]). Discourses of sustainability have tended to perpetuate binaries between human and more-than-human phenomena (Caradonna, 2014; Dryzek, 1997), although alternative explanations are found in the Gaia hypothesis developed by James Lovelock in the 1970s, and more recently in post-structural work from Donna Haraway (see works on the Chtulhucene, including Haraway, 2015) and David Miller (see works in materiality, including Miller, 2005) among others.

There are discrete differences, but also similarities, in conceptions of the environment in discourses of sustainability with most locating people outside and separate to, the physical environment. People tend to be posited as the governing stewards over natural areas and in how environmental problems are addressed (Heikkurinen, Rinkinen, Järvensivu, Wilen & Ruuska, 2016). In addition, discourses of sustainability assume that people have the capacity to ‘control’ the environments in their spatial proximity and contribute to the health of environments proximally distant (Feinberg & Willer, 2013; Opp & Saunders, 2013). Moreover, informing people about environmental degradation has been one of the main discursive strategies used by environmental educators, advocates and sustainists (sustainability scholars) alike to engage people (including governments, community and NGOs) in questions relevant to sustainability (Cox, 2012; Mayer & Frantz, 2004; Orr, 2004). This approach tends to rely on assumptions regarding the need to change or influence peoples’ ‘attitudes’ and ‘values’ towards the environment (Cox, 2012; Kollmus and Agyeman, 2002). Research that investigates the “presence, absence, influence and interactions of different environmental discourses...” (McGregor, 2003, p. 593) have had less focus in sustainability scholarship. The environment has been conceptualised in the context

of sustainability for this study informed by these ideas regarding what the ‘environment’ is, notions of stewardship, as well as control over the environment and who has this control..

Futurity

Another of the key organising ideas in discourses of sustainability is futurity (Jacobs, 1999; Relph, 2004). The term futurity articulates a concern for future generations. That is not to say that the present is absent or unvalued in questions of futurity. Rather, scholars argue that actions in the present matter for long-term ecological and social futures (Mueller-Vollmer, 1985; Ricoeur, 1984; Wade-Benzoni, Tost, Hernandez & Larrick, 2012; Wallman, 1992). Yet, what constitutes the future and whose interests are being addressed in these constitutions remain points of contestation in discourses.

In response to industrialisation, a greater capacity for material wealth and capital gain was possible, reconfiguring values in advanced-capitalist societies (Hicks & Holden, 1995). A vision that insists on incessant growth and constant ‘betterment’ has consequently changed the way that the future is constructed and thought about across a range of social fields. Loewan Walker (2014) argues that a relentless focus on the future is in consequence to neoliberal constructions of time that emphasise continual progress.

The continual pursuit of progress in modernity is claimed by Wallman (1992) to determine the way modern societies perceive the future. This ‘futures-oriented’ perspective influences actions and decision making in the present (Hicks & Holden, 1995). Similarly, Loewan Walker (2014) claims that a futures-oriented perspective tends to create a totalising orientation, where the future increasingly defines the present. In consequence, looking forward to prepare or speculate about future events

brings these imaginaries into the present moment (Adams, Murphy & Clarke, 2009; Loewan Walker, 2014). Additionally, scholars claim that perspectives and feelings about the future influence the future that is created (Hicks & Holden, 1995; Wallman, 1992). For example, Wallman (1992) proposes that having an optimistic outlook for the future dramatically increases the likelihood of this positive outlook coming to fruition.

Further to this, scholars argue that there are differences in future conceptions for personal selfhood and conceptions for the collective (Denniss & Davison, 2015; Hicks & Holden, 1995; Killick, 2012; Kinnvall & Lindén, 2010; Lucas, Leith, & Davison, 2015; Raggatt, 2010; Rasmussen, 2011; Wallman, 1992). From the scant research that has been done in this area, optimism for imaginaries among people in modern societies have been decreasing since the Second World War (Hicks & Holden, 1995; Wallman, 1992). This is in comparison to people's personal imaginaries, such as career or family plans, which have tended to remain positive (Hicks & Holden, 1995; Wallman, 1992). In this research, I position futurity as a concept that captures concerns, thoughts and plans for moments beyond the present.

Equity

Agyeman and Evans (2003, 2004) and other sustainability scholars (Caradonna, 2014; Jacobs, 1999; Lockley & Martin, 2013) argue that equity is also an organising principle of sustainability. Equity represents fairness and impartiality. It is a concept that captures considerations for the needs and rights and the fair distribution of resources for people, and for some scholars, the more-than-human world (Beder, 2000; Figueroa & Mills, 2001).

Lockley and Martin (2013) define equity in the context of sustainability as being "...within and between generations and within and between ethnic and social

groups. It is inclusive of people's mental and physical well-being and the cohesion of their communities, based on a fair distribution of natural resources" (p. 118). In their study, participants expressed equity as: respect for others, for all life and for the non-living environment. They also understood equity through the lens of social justice, both contemporary and intergenerational, in conceptions of human rights including through cultural diversity, and in the efficient and renewable use of resources (Lockley & Martin, 2013).

Equity denotes the inclusion of social groups in discussions pertaining to them. While sustainability discourses are context bound, this does not by itself mean that they are exclusionary. However, problems arise with discourses when particular social groups claim to define universal problems and solutions that apply to everyone. In the context of environmental justice, Figueroa and Mills (2001) indicate that often people who are most affected by policy decisions are not included in processes that determine how benefits and burdens are assigned (Daily & Ehrlich, 1996; Figueroa & Mills, 2001). In discourses of sustainability, there are discursive norms associated with participation. As an example, Brulle and Pellow (2006) argue the prominence of science in discourses of sustainability acts to "delegitimize the voices of those who do not speak the specialized languages of science" (p. 115). This suggests that knowing or speaking 'science' is a prerequisite to being valued in discourses of sustainability. In this study, ideas of inclusion of other voices, needs and rights of people, as well as considerations for the more-than-human world, inform understandings of equity in the context of sustainability.

Quality of life

The inclusion of quality of life in discourses of sustainability marks a deliberate attempt by scholars and policy makers to disrupt the uncritical pursuit of

economic growth for growth's sake (Greenwood & Holt, 2015; Jacobs, 1999). While numerous definitions and models of quality of life exist (Best, Cummins, & Lo, 2000), the World Health Organization (WHO) define it as: “an individual's perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns” (World Health Organization, 1997, p. 1). The WHO note that this concept encompasses the complexities of physical health, psychological state, level of independence, social relationships, personal beliefs and relationships to salient features of the environment (World Health Organization, 1997).

Yet, in contrast, many normalised discourses of modern societies promote the idea that a good quality life is achieved through material acquisition and consumption (Headey, Muffels, & Wooden, 2008). Sandel (2013) describes this as a consequence of living in an advanced-capitalist society whereby the market has expanded from an economic tool to becoming the way to organise social structures and institutions. In consequence, lives are organised around the imperative of economic growth (Headey, Muffels, & Wooden, 2008). Societal objectives guided by the pursuit of economic growth have encouraged and normalised the belief that material acquisition is a meaningful contribution to societies' economies and a pathway to a good quality of life (Jaggar, 2001; Sandel 2013). Yet, increasingly intrinsic drivers and social and cultural phenomena are recognised in the literature as influencing experiences of quality of life (Pacione, 2003; Sandel, 2013), challenging the ideas put forward in neoliberal discourses of material acquisition and consumption.

Arguments that take up questions of quality of life are evident in discourses of sustainability. For example, the 'Flower Power' culture of California sought a simple way of life more closely related to human needs for self-knowledge, social

relationships and spiritual ways (Leggett, 1987, p. 221). Alternative lifestyle discourses directly challenge hegemonic discourses of growth and materialism (Cherrier, 2009). A critique of hegemonic growth-based discourse was put forward in 2015 Pope Francis in his encyclical *Laudato Si' On the Care of Our Common Home*, where he urged greater compassion and for an emphasis on how people come to think about what constitutes a quality life. In comparison, discourses of sustainable development consider quality of life often in terms of standards of living, evident in the UN 2030 agenda which was released only two months prior to Pope Francis' call (Sachs, 2017). As summarised by Sikdar (2003), "the underlying philosophy of sustainable development is that natural resources belong to all humans, whose aspiration to higher standards of living should not be rendered limited" (p. 1928). The method that is proposed in moving past the inherent contradiction in reducing resource consumption at the same time as improving standards of living is through technological efficiencies (Sikdar, 2003).

Some quality of life indicators are informed by Maslow's (1958) theory of human motivation, better known as Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Maslow maintained that human need could be hierarchically divided into five categories. The first level of needs concerns physiology, the satisfaction of hunger, thirst, shelter; the second level denotes concerns for safety, from assault, murder, chaos; the third, concerns love and a sense of belongingness; the fourth, esteem, to be valued as a decision maker, status and confidence; the fifth level concerns self-actualisation, where each individual makes maximum use of individual gifts and interests (Hagerty, 1999, p. 250). Research has found that people of a similar social class shared similar hierarchical understandings of needs depending on their social location (Gratton, 1980). Maslow's work has been used more recently in mapping conceptions and actions for social

sustainability among engineering educators (Carew & Mitchell, 2008), who use the hierarchy of needs to think about the different assumptions engineers had about their duty of care and responsibility for the societies within which they worked (Carew & Mitchell, 2008).

While critiques of Maslow's hierarchy are not hard to find (Kenrick, Griskevicius, Neuberg, & Schaller, 2010; Hill & Buss, 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Ryff & Keyes, 1995), Peterson and Park (2010) argue that Maslow's model remains relevant today because it is a common sense approach to thinking about human needs. Similarly, Jacobs (1999) and, more recently, Greenwood and Holt (2015) claim that how quality of life is conceptualised is dependent upon people's social location, going on to claim that this understanding influences how problems of, and solutions for, sustainability are constructed. Quality of life is positioned as a concept denoting the subjective and contextually bounded motivations and aspirations of people in this study.

1.4.2 Significance of the Study and Contribution

This research makes two original contributions to the scholarship of sustainability. Firstly, it is an account of sustainability that understands the aspiration of sustainability not as a matter of abstract principle or instrumental pragmatism, but as a central component of habitus (detailed in Chapter 3) (Bourdieu, 1984; 1990a; 1990b), or the mode of being, that underlies all social action. In exploring encounters of sustainability concepts in diverse social contexts, my research extends knowledge about the importance of situated knowledges in experiences of sustainability (Macnaghten & Urry, 1990; Middlemiss, 2014). Understandings generated from this study may provide practical guidance for environmentalist and policy makers on how

they can avoid universalist accounts of sustainability and instead support the situated knowledges of the people and places they seek to work with.

Secondly, my research brings Bourdieu's theoretical perspective into the sustainability field together with spatial and temporal analyses. As sustainability research (to date) has been widely accepting of the temporal and spatial values implicit in discourses of sustainability, assuming particular relationships in space, such as local/global and temporal prioritisation of futures, I argue that this research is a significant contribution (Loewan Walker, 2014). Bourdieu's theoretical framework with spatial and temporal analyses offers ways to reconceptualise experiences of sustainability in time and space.

1.5 Positionality

Research that challenges hegemonic understandings demands a deep reflection on my position as researcher and author of text and the related positions of research participants represented in text. I explore how concepts of sustainability are present in the lives of everyday people and in the everydayness of people's lives (Research Objective 1). In this research, I am interpreting and therefore representing the cultures, the attitudes and the thoughts of others (Moules, Field, McCaffrey, & Laing, 2015). I do not take on this task lightly and am mindful of the heavy responsibility of representation.

I adopt a hermeneutic methodological framework that understands the situatedness of human dispositions in relation to some wider whole that gives these dispositions meaning. Malpas (2016, para. 17) notes, "understanding and interpretation always occurs from within a particular 'horizon' that is determined by our historically-determined situatedness." My positionality is shaped by my unique

mixing of identity as a Australian-born, caucasian, cis-gendered female, which influences the way I view and interpret my world and the people in it; by extension, the conclusions and claims I make in my research can therefore only ever be positioned, partial and tentative.

1.6 Overview of the Thesis

In order to understand the ways in which sustainability has been conceived and discursively made in recent histories, this thesis begins in Chapter 2 by locating problems of sustainability specifically within the broad history and development of sustainability discourses. I position these discourses in two discrete, but overlapping framings: critical and neoliberal discourses. In Chapter 3, I discuss the contribution Bourdieu's theory makes to this research. Specifically, I outline the key theoretical concepts of habitus, capital and field, focusing on dialectical processes of structure and agency to explain how sustainability discourses are constituted through and in socially located ways. Closely intertwined with this is a discussion in Chapter 4 of how I employ habitus as a guiding method in constructing the research design and as an interpretative tool used during analysis. I detail the study context and research design and discuss the rich context of Tasmania, focusing specifically on what might be termed the Tasmanian identity, and I explain the significance this complex context has on the constitution of sustainability in the community. I also discuss methodological challenges as well as the ways I have designed my research to address these issues.

Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 present my analysis of the research materials addressing my research questions. Chapter 5, for example, explores the meanings and experiences that are associated with 'the good life' which was an empirical discursive

frame used as an entry point into discussions about concepts of sustainability with participants. In that chapter, I provide participants' accounts of what matters in their lives, which I use as a reference point throughout the thesis to engage critically with questions of sustainability. Chapter 6 moves beyond dominant conceptions of sustainability to an analysis of what individuals 'make' of the idea in practice. Following Bourdieu, this chapter explores the ways that practices of sustainability are located in social circumstances but not determined by that location. Chapter 7 discusses how questions of sustainability are spatially constituted. Using Soja's (1996) theorisation of space and social spatiality, I show how social location matters to how sustainability concepts are represented and lived in space. Chapter 8 explores how experiences of time and temporality influence approaches to questions of sustainability. In this chapter, I explore how participants come to be empowered in affecting change in personal and collective futures.

Finally, Chapter 9 draws the findings of the research together and positions them in the broader socio-cultural context of discourses of sustainability. I argue for the importance and potential of inclusive discourses in moving sustainability agendas forward.

1.7 Summary

Discourses of sustainability have predominantly been shaped by tertiary educated, urban, middle class policy makers and environmentalists (Dryzek, 1997; Plumwood, 2002), and have excluded the perspectives of people who sit outside of these social locations. The objectives in this research are to explore how it is that social location influences encounters with concepts relevant to sustainability and encounters with hegemonic sustainability discourses. Agyeman and Evans' (2004)

concepts of ‘just’ sustainability, that include questions and concerns pertaining to the environment, to futurity, to equity and to quality of life, are used in this research as concepts relevant to sustainability. The research utilises Bourdieu’s theories as a means of understanding socially situated experiences and to think critically about how hegemonic sustainability discourses are experienced across social fields.

I claim that this study goes some way to understanding how sustainability is conceptualised and encountered in social locations outside of those which are predominantly represented in sustainability discourses, and offers possible opportunities for sustainability advocates to establish nuanced understandings of how to engage with diverse populations in meaningful ways. In this sense, the research seeks to extend understanding in sustainability scholarship about the ‘nature’ of subjectivity and how we, as sustainability scholars, can be responsive to difference in future conversations.

Chapter 2

Discourses of Sustainability

In this chapter, I overview the hegemonic discourses of sustainability prevalent in advanced-capitalist societies and present a genealogy of how problems of unsustainability have contributed to the construction of the discourses I review. I discuss the problems and proposed solutions of the multiple, and at times, competing sustainability discourses. In particular, I call into question who is included and excluded in discourses of sustainability and in so doing, I explore the role of social power and assumed individual agency. I discuss the assumptions/claims embedded in discourses of sustainability made about modern lives in places like Tasmania, where the empirical work of this study was located. I examine how these discourses may work to shape people's identities as 'a (un)sustainable' person. Finally, I explain how this critical account of the ideas of sustainability readily accepted in discourses, forms the rationale for the research project and methodological approaches employed.

2.1 Problems of Unsustainability

Discourses of sustainability have a complex and far-reaching history. For the purposes of a functional analysis, my review is situated in literature sourced primarily from English speaking, advanced-capitalist societies from the post-World War II period. In the context of my study, I focus predominantly on what could be described as *critical* discourses of sustainability. The origins of these discourses lie in the 20th century and include the deeply destabilising effects of the world wars; of social movements, including the introduction of Eastern spiritualities into Western societies; and the environmental awareness of the 1950s and 1960s that was brought to life in the United States by activists like Aldo Leopold and later by Rachel Carson in their affectively engaged scientific observation. From this position, I suggest there are two important waves of predominantly environmental but also social concerns that have contributed to sustainability discourses of modern societies. In saying this, I acknowledge the interconnectedness and blurring between the boundaries of these two ‘ideal frames’ and recognise that there is a lot of space in between. I outline each in turn below.

Critical discourses of sustainability

By the 1950s, many texts were challenging views of nature as ‘just’ a supplier of raw materials, disconnected from and separate to humanity. From the 1950s to approximately the late 1970s, a questioning of the modernist pursuit of progress, as defined and achieved through economic growth, was present in the public sphere in discourses of sustainability.

An awareness and concern of human degradation on environments entered public discourse in the 1950s with texts such as *A Sand County Almanac*, first

published by Aldo Leopold in 1949. Themes from writings of this time called for a questioning of moral responsibility and beckoned for relations with nature to be based on understanding and humility (Hart & Slovic, 2004; Plumwood, 2002).

In the early 1960s, Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* documented the toxic effects industrial society was having on the environment, and consequently, on human health (Carson, 2002). Carson cited compelling empirical scientific evidence to support her claims (Lear, 2002). The book encouraged readers to question modern ways of living. During this time, environmentalism became a new kind of worldview, challenging industrial growth and ecosystem destruction in the name of progress (Caradonna, 2014).

The late 1960s gave rise to texts about overpopulation and overexploitation of resources as problems of unsustainability. This was evidenced in highly contentious arguments such as Garrett Hardin's *The Tragedy of the Commons* (1969) and Paul Ehrlich's *Population Bomb* (1968). Ehrlich's text advanced constructions of sustainability problems as existing in the developing world, where Elrich argued overpopulation is of most concern. Subsequent scholars called for a re-evaluation of the relationships between people and with the earth (Caradonna, 2014; Beder, 2000; Biro, 2005; Orr, 2004).

Connections between religion and environmental problems were also being explored in the literature during this time (Suzuki, 2007; Tomalin, 2016). Lynn White's seminal 1967 article *The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis* claimed that "Christianity bears a huge burden of guilt...for the present ecological crisis" and the troubled 'man-nature relationship' (p. 1206-7). Other scholars (Taylor, Wieren, & Zaleha, 2016a; Taylor, Wieren & Zaleha, 2016b; Tomalin, 2016) cited Eastern philosophical traditions as the solution to the problem of the "Christian dogma of

man's [sic] transcendence of, and rightful mastery over, nature" (White, 1967, p. 1206). These arguments challenged religious doctrine for the way environments were interpreted as belonging to man (Suzuki, 1985).

In the 1970s, Meadows, Meadows, Randers and Behrens (1972) published one of the most visible and contentious reports of the era, *The Limits to Growth*, a report for the Club of Rome's project on the global environmental predicament. *In Limits to Growth*, the authors identified both physical and social elements (p. 45) as necessary ingredients for growth. They focused on the tangible and countable items within the physical necessities category, including: population, industrialisation, food production, pollution, and consumption of non-renewable natural resources. Meadows et al. (1972) concluded that:

If the present growth trends in world population, industrialization, pollution, food production, and resource depletion continue unchanged, the limits to growth on this planet will be reached sometime within the next one hundred years. The most probable result will be a rather sudden and uncontrollable decline in both population and industrial capacity (p. 23).

The radical work of the Club of Rome, combined with the writings of other ecological economists in the late 1960s and 1970s, built upon the earlier work from the 1950s to challenge conventional economic thinking and encourage global reflection on the pursuit of indefinite economic growth (Caradonna, 2014; Dryzek, 1997; Torgerson, 1995).

The environmental discourses of the 1950s to the late 1970s emphasised the catastrophic impacts of human activities on the environment and predicted

repercussions of inaction. Critical discourses purported that social structures and ways of living within societies were ultimately to blame for the environmental degradation occurring on a global scale (Dryzek, 1997; Fischer & Black, 1995; Plumwood, 2002). Linked to environmental degradation, questions of population growth and social sustainability were also posited with radical solutions for reform. For example, Schumacher (1973) made particular claims about the conception and treatment of poverty in *Small Is Beautiful*. He contended that “the primary causes of extreme poverty are immaterial, they lie in certain deficiencies in education, organization, and discipline” (p. 159). Developing countries, according to Schumacher (1993), did not need more technology or physical infrastructure or more foreign aid to eliminate poverty, rather reforms were needed in global economic relations (Castro, 2004).

Critical discourses of sustainability sought to unravel accepted cultural norms of modern societies and compelled questions about what it meant to be human in the world. This discursive setting predominantly conceptualised problems of unsustainability as cultural problems of alienation (Caradonna, 2014; Davison, 2001; Fischer & Black, 1995). That is, alienation from nature (Macnaghten & Urry, 1998) and alienation from each other (Biro, 2005). Solutions proposed by these authors reflected fundamental socio-cultural changes to the structuring of modern societies and its interactions with the environment (Dryzek, 1997; Plumwood, 2002; Stretton, 1976). Critiques of the capitalist ideology were targeted in troubling human-nature relations as well as the utilisation and sharing of resources between populations. Stretton (1976), in his book *Capitalism, Socialism and the Environment*, summarised these two key points when he said, “people can't change the way they use resources without changing their relations with one another” (p. 3). Yet, by the end of the

1970s, these discourses were being co-opted by corporatisation and other vested capitalist interests. As noted by Schlosberg (1999),

... critiques [of mainstream environmental organising] have addressed the centralization and hierarchical structure, the lack of democratic and community participation, and the general evolution of the major groups into professionalised interest groups practically indistinguishable from their adversaries (p. 9).

Schlosberg (1999) goes on to conclude that “these concerns have made the mainstream [environmentalist discourses] at best alienating, at worst irrelevant, in the eyes of many grassroots activists” (p. 9). More recent examples of critical discourses include Al Gore’s (2006) famous movie, *An Inconvenient Truth*, which sought to bring global warming into the public sphere. Another example, Tim Flannery and Catriona Wallace’s article (2015) *Fixing Politics: How can we put power back in the hands of the people?* raised questions of the democratic process.

However, since the 1970s, new and competing themes have emerged in discourses of sustainability (Spaargaren, 1997). These discourses are framed to work within the current economic model. I have broadly termed these, neoliberal discourses of sustainability. However, I also recognise that, “social languages and discourses are not boxes or tight categories” (Gee, 2015, p. 2). The ‘ideal frames’ that I distinguish are meant as a way to organise some of the ‘big ideas’ in hegemonic sustainability discourses rather than to define them in absolute terms.

Neoliberal discourses of sustainability

In 1987, concerns for environmental protection and economic development were united under a common banner termed ‘sustainable development’ by the Brundtland Commission, a commission established by the United Nations in 1983. Their report marked the first definition of sustainable development: “Humanity[’s] ... ability to make development sustainable to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, p. 15). Arguably, the term gained wide level support because of the breadth and ambiguity of the definition (Davison, 2009, 2008; Pezzoli, 1997; Redclift, 2005).

Yet, the breadth of the Brundtland definition has been criticised for over 20 years. Redclift (2005, p. 213-214) put forward a compelling critique asserting that a “favouring of the dominant science paradigm” was embedded in the definition. Further, that commonality of needs that discounted changes through time (intergenerational) and across space (intragenerational) was assumed. It was thought that solutions used in solving problems of the past could be applied to solve the problems of the present and the future (Castro, 2004). It was also assumed the homogenisation of countries and cultures through globalisation and continued economic growth was necessary to achieve sustainable development (Castro, 2004; Macnaghten & Urry, 1998). Critics⁴ argue that neoliberal discourses like that of sustainable development enable and encourage trade liberalisation and free trade

⁴ Other scholars offer a Marxist critique of global development in world systems theory, such as Andre Gunder Frank (Frank & Gills, 1999) and Immanuel Wallerstein (2011) and, more recently, Saskia Sassen. Sassen (2014) for example, in her most recent book, *Expulsions*, argues that people are effectively being systematically “expulsed” and land subsequently “killed” for capitalist defined profits (p. 155).

(Davison, 2001; Dryzek, 1997; Macnagthen & Urry, 1998; Plumwood, 2002), to which even the more conservative mainstream environmental economists express doubt that the free market could promote environmental sustainability (Daly, 2001; Pearce & Warford, 1993).

Since the release of the Brundtland definition, sustainability and sustainable development have become dominant global discourses of ecological concern (Dryzek, 1997; Okereke, 2006; Torgerson, 1995). These concepts are now firmly entrenched within many local and national governments, corporate organisations and international NGOs as well as financial institutions (Sneddon, Howarth, & Norgaard, 2006). The Brundtland definition has served to bring people to the (international) table to discuss questions relevant to sustainability (Redclift, 2005, 2009). As noted by Scrambler (2017):

The Conference and its corresponding declaration recognised customary International Environmental Law (IEL) principles, such as the precaution and prevention principles, and has no doubt been a catalyst for an increased awareness of environmental issues throughout the globe, thus influencing domestic environmental legal systems (p. 66).

Yet, sustainability discourses that have arisen as a result of high-level sustainable development discussions have moved the original focus from a needs-based approach (human and non-human) to that of a rights-based approach (taking up neoliberal policy solutions). Over 10 years ago, Redclift pointed out that today, “there is still considerable confusion surrounding what is to be sustained that different discourses of sustainable development sometimes fail to address” (2005, p. 214).

Sustainable development discourses tend to assume that environmental protection, economic prosperity and social justice go together (Dryzek, 1997). Further to this, notions of growth, particularly economic growth, tend not be challenged (Caradonna, 2014; Dryzek, 2013; Sneddon et al., 2006). In fact, pursuing economic growth was the mandate prescribed in the document outlined by the Brundtland Commission (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987):

We see...a new era of economic growth, one that must be based on policies that sustain and expand the environmental resource base. And we believe such growth to be absolutely essential to relieve the great poverty that is deepening in much of the developing world (p. 11).

Within sustainable development discourses, the emphasis is placed on finding technological efficiencies and scientific solutions to utilise resources more sustainably into the future to enable growth to continue (Hintz, 2003; Plumwood, 2002). The UN's Agenda 2030 embeds economic growth into discourses of sustainable development in Goal 8 which encourages promotions of: "sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth..."; (United Nations, 2015). There is an underlying and implicit idea that the project of modernity is incomplete (Davison, 2001; Giddens, 1990; Habermas, 1985). Therefore, working through the issues of ecological crises and problems of unjust development, merely requires a continued faith in the scientific rationalism that has enabled progress to date.

These ideals work within a knowledge-based economy and are intimately linked with agendas of education as a means of delivering on sustainable development (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1996). Education is

prominent in neoliberal sustainability discourses, cemented by the United Nations (UN) in recognising 2005-2014 as the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (Tilbury, 2005) and more recently in the Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2015). For example, under Goal 4 “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”, the following target is listed:

By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development (p. 19)

Neoliberal sustainability discourses are complicit in pursuing agendas through education, which may in part be due to the tertiary educated cohorts that have largely driven these discourses into existence (Macnagthen & Urry, 1998; Plumwood, 2002).

Neoliberal and critical discourses of sustainability also tend to compete with each other for social hegemony because of ideological principles (Roper, 2012; Stevenson, 2015). For example, sustainable development is at odds with the fundamental structural changes advocated for in critical discourses (Castro, 2004; Dryzek, 1997). Neoliberal sustainability discourses seek to work within the current economic paradigm, while critical discourses seek to disrupt and change governing ideologies of economic growth. These tensions are continually reflected in debates in natural resources management (Halsey, 1997; Stratford & Jaskolski, 2004). The

harvesting of forests, for instance, brings to the fore multiple and competing discourses of sustainability. As noted by Brown (2013), while,

(R)esponsible forest managers and environmental groups often want the same thing...The difference tends to emerge with economic expectations. Forest managers see the extraction of timber as a cornerstone of sustainable forest management. Environmentalists see it as the main destructive force for all the potential forest values.

Regarding forest management debates, Brown (2013) and Beresford (2015) identify industry interests as often aligned with neoliberal sustainability discourses in claims of sustainable forest management, while environmental groups are often aligned with critical discourses that see solutions in the conservation of forests. Sustainability as a concept and operating principle remains a discursive space of contestation. Tensions lay in the ambiguities of underlying ideological tenets that influence the construction of problems and proposed solutions. A number of alternative definitions of sustainability have been put forward (Brown, Hanson, Liverman & Meredith, 1987; Costanza & Patten, 1995; Ehrenfeld, 2008; Goodland, 1995; Johnston, Everard, Santillo, & Robèrt, 2007) in the hope of reifying ambiguities in interpretation. Yet, Davison (2008) holds that rather than expending energy on defining a term that has been defined many times over, the flexibility and fluidity of the concept should be accepted. In support of this, I suggest that any attempt at a definitive and generalist definition is doomed to fail. For a concept to hold meaning, it must be socially, culturally and historically relevant to the specificity of the locale (Dobson, 1999).

2.2 Contextualising Sustainability Discourses

While the meaning of sustainability has remained a point of contention, there has been abstract agreement about what sustainability represents at the highest levels of global governance. As discussed previously, it is agreement on what actions are required to address problems of unsustainability that tend to result in controversy. Given the widespread attention that problems of unsustainability have had in the last half of the 20th century, it is reasonable to assume that discourses of sustainability have penetrated the wider populous.

However, it is not enough to consider what is being said, but also to consider the socio-cultural context of the discourses which *situates* what is said and acts to co-determine meaning. I turn now to discuss the contexts in which discourses of sustainability have been constructed and go on to examine some of the influencing factors that have been identified in the literature to contribute to who does and does not hear and engage with them.

Some scholars suggest that people engaged in constructing sustainability discourses are unreflexively stuck in their own positioning (Gough, 2014; Hintz, 2003; Mol & Spaargaren, 2000; Paehlke, 1989; Plumwood, 2002). For example, wealthy societies have been criticised for not taking responsibility for their unsustainable practices and for positioning developing countries as primarily responsible for problems of unsustainability (Castro, 2004; Dryzek 1997; Portney, 2002). Scholars such as Paul Ehrlich, Lester Brown and others in the 1970s regarded population growth as a problem of developing countries, and similar assumptions are evident more recently in immigration policy debates and in the deeply right-wing proposals from politicians such as Pauline Hanson and Donald Trump. These sorts of

extreme constructions of population(s) frame the issue simplistically. This singular framing does not capture the social, cultural and economic contexts that need to be considered in responding to questions of population growth, nor does it account for the entrenched racism and hatred that background such framing (Castro, 2004; Commoner, 1990; York, Rosa & Dietz, 2002).

More broadly, such exclusionary discourses tend to be constructed, by people in social locations distant (culturally and economically) from the people targeted as “other” (Schlosberg, 1999). The World Bank (1991) report, for instance, acknowledges that environmental degradation has multiple causes but emphasises the factors of poverty, uncertainty and ignorance in its description. From the World Development Report 1991, “Poverty, uncertainty, and ignorance are the allies of environmental degradation” (World Bank, 1991, p. 65). Castro (2004) claims that emphasis on ignorance marks a central tenet of development work more generally. He goes on to say, “the technical experts know the direction in which the communities are to evolve, and the public participation is to steer them in that direction” (Castro, 2004, p. 201). This suggests that community participation activities tend to meet the needs of the people who design them, rather than the communities to which they engage.

Additionally, scholars assert that people engaged in constructions of environmental discourses are also unreflective. For example, Plumwood (2002) suggests that the environmental scientists of developed countries, whom she refers to as ‘EcoGuardians’, are often,

unable to recognize their own knowledge as politically situated, hence failing to recognize the need to make it socially inclusive ... and actively engaged with its boundaries and exclusions” (2002, p. 68)

Plumwood (2002, p. 68) suggests that environmental discourses are constructed in ways that are insensitive to audiences outside of the socio-cultural context of where they originated (Blowers, 1997; Hintz, 2003). This critique is directed at the lack of reflexivity on the part of ‘environmentalists’ who claim to champion ecological complexity while overlooking much social complexity, including that associated with their own social position.

Brulle and Pellow (2006) note that scientific discourses (in which many sustainability discourses are grounded) are exclusionary in the sense that they assume prerequisite knowledge which is required to speak into them. Brulle and Pellow claim that:

(B)y creating a technocratic value-neutral discourse, Western science removes moral considerations from public policy formulations and serves to silence the community. This “scientization of politics” (Habermas, (1970) p. 68) serves to delegitimize the voices of those who do not speak the specialized languages of science (2006, p. 115)

Similar arguments have been made in the field of environmental education. Gough (2014) suggests that environmental problems are constructed and perceived within environmental education from predominantly mainstream perspectives situated in a social location of privilege which are not generally reflective and inclusive of marginalised voices (Harding, 1993; Russell, Fawcett, & Oakley, 2013). However, as

evidenced in reports for the *Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005 - 2014* (Buckler & Creech, 2014) it is difficult to find evidence of discursive changes in the way environmental problems are constructed, or to locate the comprehensive educational reforms that were called for in the discourse (Huckle & Wals, 2014; Sinnes & Eriksen, 2015).

The context of how discourses come to be made in social space inevitably results in social inclusions and exclusions. Inclusions and exclusions are created in terms of who has been, and who continues to have, power in constructing the discourses and to name who is responsible for making sustainability ‘happen’. This has implications for who is authorised to speak into the discourse, who hears, who engages (and is considered to have engaged), and who participates appropriately.

2.2.1 Discursive Inclusions and Exclusions

Powerful actors

Critical discourses of sustainability tend to name up people and institutions in positions of power as responsible for solving problems of unsustainability. In critical discourses, problems are foreseen largely as global problems and solutions are constructed to match this global orientation. Having such ‘big’ problems requires ‘big’ solutions and ‘big’ action to make it happen. Experts who can supply relevant information, and governments and elites who can use the information are constructed in these discourses as the main agents creating the changes deemed to be necessary (Dryzek, 1997, 2013).

Luke (1995) similarly argues that neoliberal sustainability discourses enable power/knowledge formation for those already in positions of power, particularly international NGOs such as the United Nations and The World Bank. In consequence,

neoliberal sustainability discourses construct problems of unsustainability as ‘solvable’ through the implementation of policy regimes and legislation that align with hegemonic neoliberal capitalist ideologies (Dryzek, 2013; Torgerson, 1995; Sneddon, Howarth, & Norgaard, 2006). More broadly, this thinking has given rise to environmental legislation, governance, as well as the emergence of, experts who advise and work within big corporations as agents of change (Scott, 2009; Tarlock, 1992). Yet, the rationale tends to favour those that have developed these strategies or solutions, as purported by Baeten (2000) in reflections of a European sustainable transport vision. In accord with Luke’s (1995) argument, Baeten (2000) claims that in Europe, sustainable transport discourses have resulted in the empowerment of technocratic and elitist groups while simultaneously contributing to the disempowerment of marginalised social groups.

Corporate interests tend to articulate problems and solutions for unsustainability through policies and strategies developed by consultants and experts in the field. These documents articulate the way problems of unsustainability are positioned in discourses predicated on expert knowledges. For example, the highly controversial agricultural company Monsanto (Kleinman & Kloppenburg, 1991; Mamman, 2016; Picó Garcés, 2015), state their mission to be “Provid[ing] tools for farmers to help nourish the growing global population and help preserve the Earth for people, plants, wildlife and communities” and have a specialist Sustainability and Corporate Responsibility Committee working to deliver on this mission (Monsanto, 2016). Corporations with global reach such as Monsanto are powerful actors in influencing sustainability discourses, representing the interests and agendas of the predominantly tertiary educated, middle class, urban elites that lead and control them.

Yet, policy approaches have in many cases been successful in resolving globally recognised problems. For example, the Montreal Protocol (1987) is cited as the world's most successful environmental agreement combatting ozone layer depletion by phasing out CFCs and halons (major ozone depleting substances) (Department of Environment and Energy, n.d.; Rae, 2012). The inception of the protocol aligns roughly with the transition between critical discourses and neoliberal sustainability discourses. The policy instrument was supported by scientific evidence and by a framework of implementation (and more importantly for neoliberal discourses) that worked within the economic market (Rae, 2012).

The Protocol has become the shining light in policy approaches for addressing problems of unsustainability, particularly within discourses of sustainable development (Clifton, 2010; Handmer & Dovers 1996; Gould & Lewis 2009). It remains the 'go to' case study exemplified in negotiations at international and national policy tables, and within business circles (Castro 2004; Norman, DeCanio, & Fan, 2008). In many ways, the Montreal Protocol is a governing ideology that constructs solutions for the problems diagnosed in neoliberal discourses of sustainability. However, some scholars claim that the Protocol was successful largely because solutions fitted within the governing economic market where CFCs became a rapidly outdated technology anyway (Dryzek, 2013; Rae, 2012).

Some sustainability discourses are largely driven by the agendas of businesses whose priorities are maintaining competitive market advantages (Baeten, 1998; Castro, 2004). This research explores whether the concerns and interests of diverse social groups are reflected in sustainability discourses and how these individuals and social groups may be located within them (Research Objective 2).

Individual agency

Hegemonic discourses of sustainability rely heavily on solutions driven by experts and governmental policy or reform. Yet in this approach, lay populations are generally afforded little agency. Arguably, they are acted upon and controlled by government policies within and through these discourses, with little opportunity to speak and contribute to them (Dryzek, 1997, 2013; Fischer & Black, 1995). Pfeifer (2011) suggests that sustainable development discourses have contributed to deficit or malign constructions of people that recognise and label poor people as perpetrators of environmental degradation and discrediting local forms of knowledge (Bower, 1993; Castro, 2004).

More recently, corporate environmentalism and discourses of sustainable development have encouraged individuals to enact their agency through consumer choice (Australian Government, n.d.). Sustainable consumption and production as a broad concept first emerged in *Agenda 21* following the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992 (United Nations, 1992). As stated in the update of implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation:

47. Sustainable consumption and production is about doing more and better with less: delivering more and better services to consumers (with the same or fewer goods) while using less material resources and putting less pressure on the environment and ecosystems. In short, it is about delinking economic and social well-being from resource use and pollution...57. The main instruments to promote sustainable procurement policies are raising awareness, supplying information and training (product criteria, manuals)...buying from minority-

owned businesses; and considering ethical issues in the supply (United Nations, 2010, p. 16-20).

In this quote, faith is invested in the natural processes of the market to coordinate the improvement of the economy using environmental criteria relating to eco-consumption practices and voluntary certification processes (Dauvergne & Lister, 2010; Dreyer et al., 2016). Considerable research is now invested in promoting green consumption and individual agency to affect global change, which is evidenced by the numerous books, journals and green living guides published in recent years (a Google search for ‘2016 green living books’ returns 41,300,000 results). And much research investigates the experiences of people who conform with the discursive practices advocated for in the discourses, such as mothers living ‘light green’, making ethical food choices, navigating transport options, and making eco-design decisions (Edwards, 2013; Buckley, 2013; Kibert, 2016; Knibb & Taylor, 2017). Yet, market-based solutions are not immune from criticism.

Dryzek (1997) critiques the viability of voluntary and consumerist approaches given their abilities to ‘reach’ such a wide audience as well as relying on individuals to ‘change’. Dryzek (1997) challenges those he identifies as ‘green romantics’ to resolve the question of “how will proposed alternative subjectivities fare in a world currently structured to guarantee their frustration, and moving in a direction that reinforces such frustration?” (1997, p. 171). This critique echoes concerns from Slavoj Žižek (continental philosopher and self-identified political radical) who suggests that social structures limit an individual’s ability to act on and ‘do’ what is advocated for in these discourses (Stephenson, 2010; Žižek, 2009). Žižek goes on to question the fundamental effectiveness of such an approach anyway. He argues that

discourses like eco-consumption are attempts to ‘divert’ public attention from the broader structural changes that are required (similar to arguments made in critical discourses) to effectively address problems of unsustainability (Stephenson, 2010).

Dryzek (1997) and other authors (Castro, 2004; Fischer & Black, 1995) writing into this space critique sustainability discourses for the assumptions made about people’s subjectivities and their ordinary lives. In so doing, discourses of sustainability express particular preconceived ideas about the audiences with which they seek to engage. Castro (2004) draws on the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development document to showcase one such assumption:

International development agencies and Governments should commit financial and other resources to education and training for indigenous people and their communities to develop their capacities to achieve their sustainable self-development, and to contribute to and participate in sustainable and equitable development at the national level (United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, 1992, sec. 26.9)

Castro (2004) argues that while this is intended to empower indigenous people and communities, it does so with the ‘patronising assumption’ that these communities need training to achieve sustainable self-development (p. 199). Below I will explore some further assumptions in more detail by explicitly looking at how ‘people’ are constructed in discourses of sustainability which informs my approach to Research Question 3 and Research Objective 2. How are individuals, families, and communities of people conceived in dominant discourses of sustainability?

2.2.2 Discursive Assumptions about People and their Ordinary Lives

How people are constructed in discourses of sustainability has implications for how people see themselves reflected in these discourses. What assumptions do discourses of sustainability make about people and their ordinary lives? The following discussion presents evidence of two assumptions identified in discourses of sustainability; firstly, that people are seen as consumers and secondly, that people are individuals.

People as consumers

Since the second half of the twentieth century, consumerism has been the predominant ideology of modern societies (Leis & Viola, 1995; Ophuls, 1977). Consumerism theoretically has origins in the work of economists, such as Adam Smith (1827), who claimed that “consumption is the sole end and purpose of all production” (p. 274). The practice of consumption was also popularised in the late 19th century as the means to which self-improvement and luxury can be achieved (Trentmann, 2016). People became valued and recognised for their contributions to the economy. Consequently, consumers has become the readily regarded term to describe people actively involved in markets – the buying and selling operations that lay at the heart of societies organised around economic growth (Norman, 2006).

Within economic understandings of consumerism, the people who consume are identified as ‘consumers’ and constructed as rational utility-maximising individuals. The idea that consumers are ‘rational’ has been troubled across many disciplines, with scholars claiming that people are anything but rational in their consumption practices (Ourahmoune, 2015; Spaargaren, 1997). As noted by Spaargaren and Mol (2008), “the mainstream policies of ‘putting the incentives right’

(economics) and informing rational actors about the new green alternatives (social psychology), turn out to be insufficient” (p. 355). However, the normalised assumptions regarding consumers inherited, for the most part, from the discipline of economics remain evident in discourses of sustainability.

For instance, neoliberal sustainability discourses have sought to theorise the ways that consumers contribute to problems of unsustainability and, at the same time, how they can be the solution. Yet predominantly, common understandings of ‘the consumer’ in discourses of sustainability tend to be static conceptions, that ignore more nuanced interpretations (Ourahmoune, 2015). For example, Spaargaren and Mol (2008) advocate identification of people as either consumer-citizens or citizen-consumers. They consider these identity positions to be positive contributions toward global ‘consumership’ in the quest for eco-consumption practices.

Similarly, Clarke (2008) asserts that neoliberal sustainability discourses, such as eco-consumerism, remain invested in a consequentialist and teleological model of ethics that assume people will perform as active and aware consumers. Yet, embedded in this assumption is the idea that people are in social positions that are afforded choice (Sanne, 2002). This choice is predicated on having the time available as a consumer to navigate confusing and at times contradictory information provided on products and services (Horne, 2009; Sanne, 2002).

Normalised assumptions of the consumer and consumerism are troubled in critical discourses of sustainability (Dryzek, 1997, 2013). The social sciences and humanities disciplines offer critical accounts of the individualist utilitarian model of the consumer posited by economists, yet, these accounts too tend to position consumer identities as static and homologous categories (Trentmann, 1996, 2009, 2016). Recent explorations of consumer culture, consumer identities and

consumerism provide more nuanced accounts of what it means to be a consumer (Ourahmoune, 2015; Trentmann, 2009). Such accounts highlight the social and historical contexts and the fluidity of what it means to consume and how this influences identity and knowledge formation (Ourahmoune, 2015; Trentmann, 2009). Consumerism and constructions of ‘the consumer’ are identified in critical discourses and as problems of unsustainability with solutions that equate with consuming less. Neoliberal sustainability discourses frame problems of unsustainability around forms of consumption, thereby equating the consumer as both problem and solution; encouraging different practices of consumption rather than directing consumers to simply consume less.

Individualism

Following on from an assumption of people as consumers in neoliberal sustainability discourses, people are similarly painted as largely autonomous individuals whose ‘choices’ shape societies and economies. Spaargaren and Mol (2008), in agreement with Jackson (2008), claim that individualist models of change are outdated in sustainable consumption discourses. Middlemiss (2014) claims that, “...sustainable development scholars and practitioners need to consider a range of late-modern subjectivities, and be critically aware of how individualisation is potentially reproduced in policy and practice” (p. 930). Yet, individualist framings remain prevalent in discourses of sustainability. For example, Page-Hayes (2015) analysed article abstracts (n=487) published from 2011-2015 on ‘pro-environmental behaviour’ collected via internet search engines, *Web of Science* and *Scopus*. Her findings showed that over 70% of these articles concentrated on the individual and relatively apolitical activities such as recycling, private car use and electricity usage.

Arguably, discourses of sustainability have adopted assumptions that recognise people predominantly as individuals through consumption practices.

In consequence to the capitalist mode of production, people have arguably become more individualised (Abercrombie, Hill, & Turner, 2000). Individualism assumes that a person is unique and free to act (with certain limitations accorded with the law). This is also assumed to be a necessary element for societies structured by market relations (Abercrombie, Hill, & Turner, 2000); with people connected predominantly through buying and selling. Adding to this literature, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002), among other sociologists, link individualisation to modernity (Giddens, 1991). They suggest that people's identities are a constant project and are not just a 'given' based on the social, cultural and political context of the social location (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; White & Wyn, 2013), which in turn encourages individuals to create their own biographies and to express themselves in career choice, fashion, material possessions and hobbies among other life practices. Other scholars talk about the creation of a life as a kind of artistic project (Bateson, 2001; Bauman, 2008).

Yet, some feminists have argued that the individualisation thesis is biased toward middle class male privilege and the scope for agency that this positioning affords (Adkins, 2002; Jackson, 2008; Skeggs, 2003). These critiques suggest that not all 'individuals' have the same opportunities for the agency assumed within understandings of what has been called the reflexive project of the self (Giddens, 1991). While the equity of selfhood aligned with an individual's social location remains contentious, constructions of individualism are increasingly popularised in modern societies. Such accounts of people as individuals are embedded in the assumptions of neoliberal sustainability discourses (Middlemiss, 2008).

In neoliberal sustainability discourses of sustainable consumption, for instance, it is assumed that people act autonomously, think autonomously and rationally, and that people are happy to accept personal responsibility for what are often thought of as ‘global problems’ such as child labour or deforestation (Clarke, 2008; Seyfang, 2006). Maniates (2001) labels these ideas in American environmentalism as ‘individualisation of responsibility’.

In contrast, research and policy solutions to problems of unsustainability often include creating and establishing networks of people, such as in local food systems to promote eating and sharing local produce (Hendriks, Dormans, Lagendijk, & Thelwall, 2017; Wittman & Blesh, 2017), or carpool networks to reduce greenhouse emissions from single occupancy transportation (Bruck, Incerti, Iori, & Vignoli, 2017; Tahmasseby, Kattan & Barbour, 2015). Constructing people as individuals influences how problems of unsustainability and relative solutions are constructed and conceptualised in the discourses.

Yet, how people are constructed in discourses influences how it is that ‘people’ relate to them. Can particular people see themselves reflected in what is being said? And if so, how do they see themselves reflected? Conrad (2012) terms this “the resonance ability of the frames presented” (p. 1). Sustainability literature suggests that if people cannot identify or connect with a discourse, then there is less likelihood of engagement with it (Conrad, 2012; Hajer, 1995, 2005). Critical questions should be asked of how people are experiencing discourses of sustainability. For instance, are the assumptions (such as people as consumers and individuals) representative of the people to/about which these discourses speak? And, what kind of representations of more ‘marginal’ people are implicit or explicit in sustainability discourse? In this research, I trouble these assumptions by asking

individuals how they locate themselves in various ways in discourses of sustainability (Research Objective 2).

2.3 Summary

In this chapter, I provided an overview of the historical and current context of hegemonic sustainability discourses in modern societies. I discussed how problems of unsustainability including but not limited to environmental damage, poverty and increasing population have compelled multiple and competing discourses of sustainability. I proposed that there are two waves of sustainability discourses, noting the caveat that the division between these two waves is anything but clear. The first wave is considered critical discourses that question modernist pursuits of progress, as defined and achieved through economic growth. The second wave are considered neoliberal discourses that are framed within the current economic model. While many attempts are made by scholars and policy makers to define what sustainability *is*, I argued (in support of Davison (2008) and Dobson (1999)) that for a concept to hold meaning, it must be socially, culturally and historically relevant in a local context. This study goes some way to understanding *located* encounters and conceptualisations of sustainability in social locations outside what is predominantly represented in sustainability discourses.

In addition, research reported in this chapter, compels scholars and policy makers to consider how agency is constituted and how individualism is represented and reflected in discourses of sustainability. With the exception of the authors mentioned above, almost completely absent from the field of sustainability are conceptualisations of what sustainability means and can look like from across a diversity of social locations. This work, I argue, provides an opportunity for

environmentalists and policy makers to examine and understand – in new ways – the experiences of sustainability from people who, for the most part, are disengaged from hegemonic accounts.

In the next chapter, I begin to examine more closely conceptions of social location and identity and develop the theoretical and methodological framework that I utilise in this study to explore encounters of sustainability of people from a diverse range of social contexts.

Chapter 3

Conceptualising the Research

This chapter outlines the theoretical and methodological framework that was used to guide the research. Pierre Bourdieu's theory of habitus was used to conceptualise the study and also acted as method in the development of research questions and research design (Nash, 1999; Reay, 1995, 2004). I start this chapter by elaborating my ontology and epistemology in section 3.1 and then explain the research process. In section 3.2, I articulate Bourdieu's theoretical concepts utilised through the research journey, before moving onto section 3.3 to outline how hermeneutics framed key features of the methodology.

3.1 Ontological and Epistemological Positioning

Ontology is the study of being and what constitutes reality. Simply put, ontology embodies a core understanding of 'what is' (Gray, 2013). In Chapter 2, I argued that there are multiple and competing discourses of sustainability and that the construction of these discourses reflect the social locations from which these

discourses originated. Further, I claimed that interpretations of discourses vary according to where people are socially located.

In these claims, I began to make evident the ontological and *epistemological* positioning that I bring to this research. Epistemology refers to the study of understanding, or, ‘what it means to know’ and how it is that knowledge is created (Grey, 2013; Steup, 2017). I assume that there are multiple (realities) ways of seeing the world (ontology) and that meaning is made differently and subjectively as a result of perspective (epistemology). I position this research within the critical constructivist perspective (Schwandt, 1994).

Critical constructivism offers an account of the ways in which social realities are created. Critical constructivism is an extension of constructivism, which is antithetical to positivism and challenges claims to forms of knowledge that are purely objective and neutral. In asserting the temporal and cultural situatedness of knowledge, critical constructivists position knowledge and phenomena as socially constructed in historical, social, cultural, economic and political contexts (Kincheloe, 2005). Central in the research process, issues of equity and perspective are positioned as paramount by seeking to understand how socio-historic aspects influence and shape an object of inquiry (Agger, 1991; Schwandt, 1994).

Schwandt notes that “constructivists are anti-essentialists. They assume that what we take up to be self-evident kinds or categories (e.g. man, woman, truth, self) are actually the product of complicated discursive practices” (1994, p. 236). In this project, I explore how concepts relevant to discourses of sustainability hold meaning and are embodied across different social locations (Research Objective 1). I examine the ‘complicated discursive practices’ that go on in the process of meaning-making

and adopt Lincoln and Guba's (1986) supposition that human behaviour is always time and context bound.

In this research, I seek to understand how the concerns, to which sustainability discourse directs us, which are actually concerns for everybody (and indeed for every living and non-living thing), are given meaning across a variety of social locations and social fields (Research Question 2). Therefore, this inquiry is attuned to the multiplicity of situated knowledges (Haraway, 1988; Harding, 2004) and calls for a theoretical framework that is dynamic, reflexive, encompassing concepts that can be used to build understanding of the multiplicity present in the social world.

To do this, I use the work of sociologist and cultural theorist Pierre Bourdieu and draw on his concepts of habitus, field, and capital to draw together analysis of the complex and nuanced social, cultural and environmental influences that shape interpretations and practices of concepts of sustainability. I also work to deepen my theoretical investigations of habitus using Soja's spatial trialectic.

3.2 Theoretical Framing

Pierre Bourdieu made significant contributions to the fields of sociology, anthropology and philosophy during the second half of the 20th century, publishing over 25 influential books. While Bourdieu developed a multitude of theories about the social world, this research project uses the following concepts as a theoretical framework: doxa (the largely undisputed and undiscussed normative practices that order social life); habitus (everyday world social practices constructed and embodied in individuals); capital (the economic, social and cultural resources of individuals); and field (an arena with its own cultural practices and common sense logics that without these features, would make it unrecognisable). Bourdieu's concepts represent

an attempt to develop and employ tools to navigate dualisms between structure and agency and between objectivism and subjectivism. Habitus, as described in more detail below, positions structure and agency in a dialectical relationship. That is, individuals are products of the structures in their social worlds, but at the same time, they are active agents in producing, influencing and shaping those same structures. I use theoretical tools from Bourdieu to explore interpretations of sustainability from located but agentic social actors. These theoretical tools are used to think about bridges between structural constraint and agency.

In addition, a main focus of the research project is the interpretation and embodiment of sustainability concepts in people from different social locations. With supporting concepts of capital and field, habitus will afford ways of making sense of why particular interpretations and experiences may exist in certain social locations. For example, an individual may suggest that governments are responsible in addressing and responding to problems of unsustainability. Considering the social location of the particular individual, it may be that through occupation they are connected to social welfare; that there is a familial intergenerational reliance on government assistance and they are connected socially to others who share similar life conditions. In this way, the individual perceives responsibility to rest with government to act on problems of unsustainability, because this perspective aligns with habitual experience.

3.2.1 Habitus

One of the intentions of this research is to consider the interpretations and experiences of concepts of sustainability outside of dualistic framings (i.e., structure/agency) that have been common in sustainability literature to date (Dryzek,

1997). Bourdieu's theory of habitus provides a framework that attempts to overcome such dualisms (Bourdieu, 1984, 1990a; Lizardo, 2004; Marcoulatos, 2001). Bourdieu used the concept of habitus to bring structure and agency into dialectical relation to explain social phenomena. If structure refers to "the enduring, orderly and patterned relationships between elements of a society" (Abercrombie, Hill, & Turner, 2000, p. 326) and agency refers to "the way an individual creates the world around them" (Abercrombie, Hill, & Turner, 2000, p. 9), then habitus refers to the ways in which individual dispositions of thought, feeling, taste and judgment are structured by and through ordinary (or habitual) social practices. This idea recognises the capacity of individuals to affect and alter the world around them.

While Bourdieu has not been the first sociologist to consider the interconnections between actors and societal structures (see works by Berger and Luckmann [1966] and Bernstein [1961]), his work has been influential because of the way in which he tried to circumvent determinism by bringing structure and agency together (Nash, 1999; Navarro, 2006; Reay, 1995). Bourdieu incorporates analysis of social context in understanding social phenomenon, through questions of social field and capital, but in a way that does not exclude or dismiss agency from the individual.

Habitus is dynamic and adaptive, embodying past experiences while adapting to the necessities of the field in the present moment. As defined by Bourdieu (1984, p. 101), habitus is "an objective relationship between two objectivities". This quote captures the discrete and dialectical interaction that occurs within a situation and a habitus that, as Bourdieu puts it,

enables an intelligible and necessary relation to be established between practices and a situation, the meaning of which is produced by the habitus

through categories of perception and appreciation that are themselves produced by an observable social condition (1984, p. 101)

For example, a person may be required to attend an event outside of their cultural milieu of experiences, or outside of the experiences of their habitus. This person may have never been afforded opportunities to attend cocktail parties. However, this person finds themselves in a position that requires their attendance. Questions form quickly: How should one act? What is appropriate behaviour? What is appropriate attire? Their habitus is a more or less useful resource for acquiring the information needed about the field they must enter and 'perform' legitimately. At the cocktail party, the person probably adapts their behaviour, mimics and follows the cultural practices of others perceived to have deeper knowledge of the field. The practice of performing small talk, of catching the eye of the waiter to bring drinks around, balancing nibbles, drinks and conversation are part of the situation. With increasing exposure and opportunities to perform, over time, such culturally legitimated practices can become part of an individual's repertoire or habitus, and are no longer invested with intentional thought. In fact, the person may begin to enjoy such encounters and develop a 'taste' for them.

More simply, Reay (2004) describes the habitus as the body being present in the social world as well as the social world being present in the body. Expanding this idea, Reay (2004) implies that social worlds are always located within the individual, through practical reason and performances in fields. In her paper on situated knowledges, Haraway (1988) critiques knowledge that is unlocatable and finds that these claims of knowledge are 'irresponsible' (1988, p. 583). In comparison, situated knowledge is located and is always only a partial perspective. Habitus resonates as a

conceptual tool for acknowledging and working with the situatedness of knowing and being.

When applying habitus to research, it is an inductive theory that incorporates reflexivity by the very nature of how habitus comes to exist (Bourdieu, 1990b). That is, habitus is both fluid and fixed within agents, and it changes in response to the exposures and experiences of the social world. A person's habitus is not only made of past experience but also of present exposure and in-vivo strategising, as well as formulating future intentions. The concept of habitus presents personhood as a shifting positioned body in social space.

The concept of habitus has origins in anthropological and sociological thinking, developed in various forms by Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger, Weber, Durkheim and Mauss (Bourdieu, 1990a). However, Bourdieu's use of habitus differs from those who used it previously, in that it explicitly responded to structuralism which was the dominant paradigm of the time in social analysis. While Levi-Strauss (1974) is considered a founder of the paradigm, prominent scholars also included other structuralist thinkers who preceded or who were contemporaries of Levi-Strauss such as: de Saussure, Jakobson, Piaget, and Lacan (Abercrombie, Hill & Turner, 2000). In its most general understanding, structuralism focuses on social structures and purports that deep social forces effectively create the individual (Abercrombie, Hill & Turner, 2000). Structuralism was also taken up in various ways by Marxists, thinking about the underlying structures of the mode of production (Lewis, 2017). Bourdieu developed the concept of habitus to signify the active and resourceful aspects of practice, as opposed to previous structuralist understandings of practice that conceived it as simple execution (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 13).

According to Lizardo (2009), the concept of habitus can be used theoretically as either a classifying structure, or as a generative structure of practical action. He suggests that habitus is a classifying structure with origins in thinking from Piaget, shown in Bourdieu's claims of habitus being a "structured structure" (2009, p. 10). At the same time, Lizardo argues that habitus is an "active generative matrix of action" and practical action occurs through repeated participation (2009, p. 9).

The use of habitus in research has been predominantly classificatory in nature, while the use of habitus as a generative structure of practical action has been somewhat limited (Holt, 1998; Mills, 2013; Reay, 1995, 2004). As such, habitus is widely used across fields, predominantly in educational sociology and cultural studies, however, also in many others (Holt, 1997; Miller, 1998; Reay, 1995, 2004; Watt-Malcolm & Barabach, 2010). Yet, habitus is not without critiques, including Crossley (2001), who argues the concept is ill-defined, King (2000), who claims it is deterministic, or Tooley and Darby (1998) who contend it offers nothing theoretically new.

While many researchers consider habitus as loosely defined or hard to pin down, many (including myself) consider this as its strength (Gruenewald, 2004; Hargreaves, 2011; Nash, 1999; Reay, 1995, 2004). Reay (1995) suggests habitus as a method useful in investigating social phenomena (Inghilleri, 2005). Habitus is employed similarly in this project, through analysing interpretations and practices of concepts of sustainability in a way that is open to the complexity of interactions and experience. Exploring "the experience of social agents and...the objective structures which make this experience possible" (Bourdieu, 1988, p. 72) is the intention of the research project, with a specific focus on experiences related to concepts of sustainability.

Habitus, as a concept, considers the active performance of subjects in the social world and the ways in which this interaction is navigated. In this research project, I explore how concepts of sustainability are made meaningful in people's everyday lives (Research Objective 1). How are questions of sustainability navigated and how does this vary with social location? Bourdieu (1990b) asserts that habitus transforms across a person's life, however is most notably and significantly internalised during the early years. Beliefs and ways of being perpetuate in habitus because of a predisposition to reinforcing current understandings and worldviews. This raises questions relevant to this research, for instance, how have dominant discourses of sustainability aligned with or challenged worldviews of people from different social locations? Coupled with an over-reliance and greater weight given to previous experiences, the concept of habitus rejects or avoids any new information that calls into question its ongoing existence and accumulated information (Bourdieu, 1990b). In regard to the current research, this idea troubles the very premise of sustainability discourses that call for behavioural changes in people's everyday practices.

The concept of habitus encompasses and generates all reasonable and common sense behaviours within the context of objective regularities of a person's life and circumstances (Bourdieu, 1990b). However, dispositions of the habitus are influenced in large part by an actor's ability to activate economic, social and cultural capital.

3.2.2 Capital

Capital can be present in three fundamental forms: as economic, cultural and social capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Economic capital represents resources that can be immediately converted into money and also property. Economic capital is a

precondition to other forms of capital in many instances, due to the necessity of the expenditure of time required for the accumulation of cultural capital.

Cultural capital is the assets that enable ascription to particular social fields and exists in three forms: embodied in agents in the form of knowledge or skills; the objectified state, such as cultural goods, e.g., books, art pieces; and in the institutionalised state such as educational qualifications. Embodied cultural capital requires an investment in time by the agent. This form of capital, once embodied, cannot be transmitted instantaneously like economic capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Similarly, objectified cultural capital, although transmittable and accessible with economic capital, requires the agent to have access to the embodied cultural capital to use particular objects for their specific purpose, e.g., one can buy a piano but requires the embodied cultural capital to play it. Institutionalised cultural capital is accumulated through the comprehension of the meaning and value placed upon it, which is made possible only within the schemes of perception and appreciation for which it is linked (Pudsey, 1996).

Social capital refers to the resources available within a network of human relationships, or in the membership of a group. Resources of social capital depend on the individual's web of social connections and on the capital (economic or cultural) of each of those persons to whom the individual is connected and upon whom the individual could potentially draw in some way (Bourdieu, 1986). Similar to cultural capital, social capital requires an expenditure of time and thus of economic capital, whether directly or indirectly, in order to create and maintain the social relations within the network which are paramount to the acquisition and maintenance of social capital.

The forms of capital at an individual's disposal at any given time influences that person's position in a field and the accessibility of other fields (Bourdieu, 1986). Notably however, capital is not fixed and it changes over time in relation to interactions that occur in fields (Bourdieu, 1984, 1990b). For instance, a friend may ask an individual to come along to a gym. The individual is exposed to a new field, a field of exercise, which requires particular cultural capital to participate in legitimate ways. The individual accumulates this cultural capital through exposures in the field and thus over time embodies the legitimated cultural capital; including knowing techniques of movement, or understanding the correct sequencing of training regimes. This cultural capital becomes embodied in the individual and becomes a part of the individual's habitus.

Social fields and the relations between agents within those fields are structured by capital. Bourdieu suggests that ownership of capital is a precondition for greater ownership of capital (Bourdieu, 1984, 1986). Capital is defined by Bourdieu as:

accumulated labour (in its materialised form or its 'incorporated,' embodied form) which, when appropriated on a private, i.e., exclusive, basis by agents or groups of agents, enables them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labor' (1986, p. 46).

One of the objectives of the research is to explore how positioning in the social world influences perspectives and performances of sustainability. What significance does capital have in terms of how these concepts are enacted in people's lives? Concurrently, how does this influence how dominant discourses of sustainability are interpreted and hold meaning in people's lives? Bourdieu's work on

the social world provides the frame of reference in which to consider this positioning in all of its complexity; the complexity of interactions between habitus and capital. However, the grand narratives that act to structure societies influence the ways in which capital is deployed in the social world.

3.2.3 Doxa

Bourdieu surmises how ways of being in the world are informed, by what he termed *doxa*, the macro scale understandings that shape what people understand to be ‘knowledge’ and ‘truth’ (Schulze, Gryl, & Kanwischer, 2014, p. 164). Doxa offers a way of understanding how it is that the social world is objectively ordered. Doxa, from the Greek word meaning a common belief, can be described as the rules that are prescribed and inscribed in the social world and onto bodies in such a way that they are beyond conscious recognition.

Bringing attention to, and recognising, the undisputed and undiscussed elements that order social life assists in making sense of how and why agents understand and perform in particular ways. For example, as discussed in Chapter 2, constructions of discourses of sustainability are temporally and spatially dependent upon how problems of unsustainability have been diagnosed. Implicit in these constructions, as well as in how they are interpreted, are doxic regimes of thinking and being. Doxa is more than the provision of rules; it is by definition, objectively structuring the way people orient themselves and give meaning to a field, or act within a field.

Neoliberalism has been put forth as a doxa that objectively orders social life and predominantly determines the ways people perceive and understand social order and individual purpose (Kerski, Demirci, & Milson, 2013). Ezzy (2002) describes

neoliberalism as a grand narrative that has spread predominantly out of America.

Bourdieu (1998, p. 126) considers “Neoliberalism [as] a powerful economic theory whose strictly symbolic strength, combined with the effect of theory, redoubles the force of the economic realities it is supposed to express.”

As such, the axiological lens, that is, the way that value is ascribed within advanced-capitalist societies is primarily driven by the accumulation of capital (Leis & Viola, 1995; Ophuls, 1977). The way that people *know* the world is through their engagement with capital, to the extent that this is *the* way of being, unquestioned by the majority of the population, known in the literature as the neoliberal subjectivity (Burman, 2005; Bondi, 2005; Gill, 2008).

3.2.4 Field

In addition to habitus, capital and doxa, Bourdieu developed a concept to recognise the different more or less organised spaces or arenas of activity operating in the social world. He claimed that each of these distinct spaces have their own kind of common sense, ways of thinking, and ideas that are all inseparable to each other and co-constructed (Bourdieu, 1990a). He labelled this concept *field* and described it as “in short, with the notion of field, one gives oneself the means of grasping the particularity in generality, and generality in particularity” (1990a, p. 141), or in another way, as a “structure of possibilities” (1990a, p. 104). The cocktail party described above is an example of a field, as it has its own cultural practices and common sense logics that without these features, would make it unrecognisable as a cocktail party.

Bourdieu describes “the habitus as the feel for the game... [which is] embodied and turned into second nature” (Bourdieu, 1990a, p. 63). Through this

comment, Bourdieu shares some insights into his conceptualisation of the interconnectedness of habitus to social fields. The field is often described by Bourdieu (1984, 1990a, 1990b) as a ‘game’ with ‘players’. Concepts of sustainability are dynamic and far-reaching across social worlds and discrete spaces within social worlds. However, field is put to work in this thesis through time and space, for example, in considerations of particular expectations of how space is produced and used and how time is to be ‘spent’ or ‘saved’ through regulated and known actions of a field, like work or family. Similarly, spatial fields taken up in this study are multiple and many, including virtual fields such as online communications as well as physical fields like neighbourhood streets.

Actions within a field are dependent upon the interactions between the specific regularities of the field, agents’ habitus and available and appropriate resources. Bourdieu refrains from using the term rules, instead preferring the term regularities because of the connotations that the term ‘rule’ inflicts, i.e., that social actions are explicitly and authoritatively defined. The shape of a field is subject to change over time, depending on the relations between actors. Agents struggle within the ‘game’ for control of the object, or ‘capital’ which is perceived in that field to be of value; for example, qualifications in the educational field. While Bourdieu’s concept of field is a way of locating people in social spaces and differentiating between these spaces, to better understand the relations in spaces and how spaces come to be made, I have drawn on Edward Soja’s (1996) spatial trialectic.

3.2.5 Soja’s Trialectic of Spatiality

I find that post-structural accounts of spatiality, particularly Soja’s work, provide a useful framework for thinking about questions of sustainability because of

the interconnected and dynamic explanation of people in space. Soja (1996) puts forward a framework for thinking about spatiality that accounts for *perceived*, *conceived* and *lived* representations and practices. I suggest that sustainability is a spatially constituted concept and in subsequent chapters, and in the context of concepts of sustainability, I claim that how participants *perceive* of spaces in the everyday world are reflective of located socio-cultural conditions; yet, there are *conceived* spaces of power and ideology that act to dominate, although these representations, I claim, are made meaningful in *lived* spaces in socially located ways. This is important because it helps to illuminate how and why the social location of habitus is influential in approaches to questions of sustainability.

In Soja's (1996) work, representations of space are described as the *conceived* space of society. He draws on Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* to suggest that this is where most attention is given and is obvious in current society where we routinely use and construct 'social' symbols, codifications and abstract representations (Watkins, 2006). "In these dominating spaces of regulatory and ruly discourse, these mental spaces, are thus the representations of power and ideology, or control and surveillance" (Soja, 1996, p. 67). In our mental constructs and representations of what we perceive to be rational, abstract understandings are informed by the "logic and forms of knowledge, and the ideological content of codes, theories, and the conceptual depictions of space" (Shields, 1992, p. 163). In this sense, representations of space, such as discourses of sustainability, are moderated and mediated by invested claim-makers and stakeholders (i.e. environmentalists, industry lobbyists, etc.).

The term 'spatial practices' comes originally from Lefebvre's work, and it is adapted by Soja in his trialectic to denote *perceived* space. Soja describes perceived space as "materialized Spatial Practice" (1996, p. 10), or in Lefebvre's words, "the

practical basis of the perception of the outside world” (1974, p. 40). Spatial practices are the behaviours, or the embodied dispositions of habitus. Within discourses of sustainability, spatial practices describe the ‘seen’ behaviours of people, such as recycling or practices advocated for in eco-consumption discourses. Spatial practices are tangible, materialised and visible and can be measured and accurately described (Soja, 1996).

Spaces of representations and spatial practices coalesce in Soja’s thirdspace, which he terms representations of space. It is the thirdspace that transcends material and mental dimensions and encourages spatial thinking to occur in different ways. Soja (1996) notes that “spaces of representation contain all other real and imagined spaces simultaneously” (p. 69), identifying this as the lived space. In this sense, the lived space where ideologies such as capitalism and material spatial practices such as work intertwine the three spatial layers to produce a complex understanding of multiple geographies. I employ Soja’s (1996) spaces of representation to think about if, and how discourses of sustainability are taken up in socially located ways.

3.3 Methodology

The objectives of this research are to explore understandings and experiences of sustainability concepts and discourses across diverse social contexts, somewhat absent in the research literature (McNaghten & Urry, 2008; Middlemiss, 2014). This methodology is intended to reflect the objectives of the inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Silverman, 2014). Methodology provides the principles to govern the process of a research inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Methodological frameworks provide researchers with a way of comprehensively and coherently articulating the logic of the

research and maintain consistency in research design, application of methods, and analysis and interpretation of findings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Silverman, 2014).

The emphasis on interpretations and embodiment in the research project aligned with the principles of the hermeneutics methodology (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Lambert, Glacken & McCarron, 2011). The hermeneutic methodology values discursive practices and the interpretive processes of human interaction. At the same time, hermeneutics understands that it is the situatedness of human action in relation to some wider whole that gives action meaning (Abercrombie, Hill, & Turner, 2000). With his concept of habitus, Bourdieu similarly promotes inquiry into interactions that occur between people and fields in the social world. Hermeneutics is used as a way of turning my interest in habitus, capital and field into a research design.

3.3.1 Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics emphasises discourse in processes of meaning-making. It is concerned with understanding, not explanation of experience (Moules, Field, McCaffrey, & Laing, 2015). Ricoeur (1981, p. 146), makes the point that “an inscription of speech...guarantees the persistence of speech”, highlighting the power of discourse to perpetuate and reinforce ways of being in social space by the mere act of inscribing it. Thus, scholars consider hermeneutics a versatile and malleable methodology that is focused on the processes of interpretation and understanding transactions between speaker and receiver, acknowledging the affective power of discourses (Denzin & Lincoln 2005; Dilthey, 1976; Ricoeur, 1981).

Historical origins of hermeneutics

The etymology of the term hermeneutics, from the Greek messenger god Hermes, reflects the processual account of understanding. Hermes carried messages

from givers to receivers, interpreting the message from the giver to then communicate this to the receiver in a way that would be meaningful (Ezzy, 2002; Mueller-Vollmer, 1985). Historically, the concept of hermeneutics was used by theologians to describe the process of biblical interpretation (Bleicher, 1980; Gadamer, 2008). During hand-copying of the bible, errors were often introduced. Hermeneutics referred to the problem of recovering the authenticity of the text (Abercrombie, Hill, & Turner, 2000). Hermeneutics expanded philosophically during the 19th and 20th century as a response to the increasingly dominant positivist world view of modernism (Dilthey & Jameson, 1972). Hermeneutics challenges ideas of the universal ‘truth’ that originated in the Enlightenment period (Dilthey & Jameson, 1972). The hermeneutic circle is a representation of the dialectical and iterative processes of meaning-making that has been adapted, philosophised and developed by a number of prominent hermeneutic scholars, including Heidegger (Mantzavinos, 2016), Schleiermacher (Forster, 2017) and Gadamer (1989) and by more recent scholars, such as Ezzy (2002) and McCaffrey and Moules (2016) among others.

Today, hermeneutics is used much more widely to denote interpretation generally, with hermeneutics scholars maintaining that there is no ‘truth’ behind communicative acts (Ezzy, 2002). This is not to suggest that hermeneutics rejects truth in its entirety, rather it engages with communicative acts as a way of discovering situated *truths*.

Principles of the tradition

Hermeneutics is primarily concerned with the interpretive processes of understanding that occurs through communication (Ezzy, 2002). This study engages people in conversations that relate to their understandings of the world. Hermeneutics in its application is concerned with the interpretations that occur in the social world

(McCaffrey & Moules, 2016). A recent example of the application of hermeneutics in a research context comes from Mitchell, Dupius and Kontos (2013). These authors take a hermeneutic approach in their research on discourses of dementia. They investigated the “troubling discourse surrounding the diagnosis of dementia” and go on to propose alternative discursive strategies grounded in research and experience (p. 1).

Similarly, in this study, I seek to explore everyday interpretations and forms of expression of sustainability discourses (Research Objective 2). Like Mitchell, Dupius and Kontos (2013), in Chapter 2, I reviewed literature pertaining to discourses of sustainability and contended that these discourses vary in the ways that problems of unsustainability are diagnosed and subsequent solutions determined. Further, I claimed that sustainability discourses have emerged out of particular social fields that imperceptibly advance the interests of these fields. I use hermeneutics to ground this study in research and experience to explore alternative articulations of concepts relevant to sustainability.

Hermeneutics does not separate the subjectivities of the speaker from their interpretations but recognises them as constituted by and through the social fields in which speakers operate. As Boeckh writes, “... (E)very speaker or writer employs language in a special, personal way, modifying it according to his own individuality. To understand anyone, therefore, his subjective qualities must be taken into account” (1985, p. 136). In this research, I take up Boeckh’s notions of individuality and seek to explore how social fields influence interpretation and meaning-making related to questions of sustainability (Research Question 2).

Epistemologically, hermeneutics has been described as dialectical because the dichotomy between subjectivity and objectivity is regarded as untenable (Howard,

1982, p. 121). However, when Gadamer (1989) talks about subjectivity he has something different in mind from what is imagined in the dominant (positivist) account. He is not just bringing together positivist ideas of objectivity and subjectivity, but shifting our understanding of both. Gadamer's expression of subjectivity is articulated by Malpas (2016) as "something that has its own order and structure to which one is given over." This understanding is somewhat reflective in the generative aspects of habitus in how this concept works to transcend subjectivism and objectivism (Lizardo, 2009).

The *hermeneutic circle* provides a visual representation of the way subject/object has been surpassed in the hermeneutic tradition. The hermeneutic circle represents the dialectical and iterative process of meaning-making in any interpretive act (see Figure 1). "Understanding is always a movement in this kind of circle, which is why the repeated return from the whole to the parts, and vice versa, is essential" (Gadamer, 1989, p. 189).

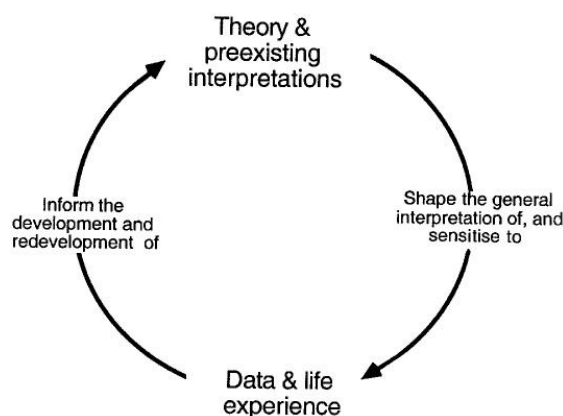


Figure 1. Hermeneutic Circle (Ezzy, 2002, p. 26)

The circle, in its most general sense, articulates the ‘to-ing and fro-ing’ that occurs in any interpretative act. For example, the circle may denote the interpretation of a text or the communicative transaction between people. Within understandings of the hermeneutic circle, interpretations are continuously shaped by the experiences and situatedness of the texts and/or people involved in the exchange. Documents are always alive and open to multiple interpretations that may be different from what the author/speaker had intended. Further to this, Ezzy (2002) indicates that there is no ‘truth’ outside the dialectical circle of interpretation and experience. Interpretation and theories are developed by people and are continuously redeveloped through an iterative process of exposure and meaning-making (Bleicher, 1980).

However, this process never fully captures the intended interpretation of the author/speaker. According to Gadamer (1989), a temporal and spatial gap exists between author/speaker and the interpreter that can never be completely bridged. The abridging that does occur, according to Gadamer, can be referred to as a ‘fusion of horizons’ (1989, p. 305). This is a useful concept to work with in this study, given that I am exploring how habitus works to make sense of concepts relevant to sustainability. Is the bridging that does occur in making sense of dominant discourses of sustainability different according to social location? Building on from this, conceptual tools such as the fusion of horizons orients a direction of inquiry into the broader temporal and spatial circumstances to which the interpretations are enacted.

Elaborating on this further, the concept of horizons refers to the spatial and temporal situatedness of any understanding or interpretation. According to Malpas (2016), “understanding and interpretation always occurs from within a particular ‘horizon’ that is determined by our historically-determined situatedness” (emphasis added). Malpas (2016) goes on to note that horizons are not static, but ever-changing

according to the effects of history. He argues the concept is reflective of the classifying structures of habitus, which also dialectically frame the interaction between individuals and the social world.

Working with the concepts

Pragmatically, the hermeneutic tradition affords a range of conceptual tools useful for conceptualising the complexities of the research questions. These tools include strategies interpreting text (e.g., such as transcripts from focus groups, interviews). Using these strategies, I have been able to extend my inquiry into habitus using hermeneutical approaches to understanding and analysing material generated from the research. Further, the hermeneutic circle and Bourdieu's understanding of habitus both acknowledge interpretation as a process that includes making meaning from previous experiences and new knowledge. Bourdieu, in *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977), described habitus as "the durably installed generative principle of regulated improvisations..." (p. 78); in a similar way, hermeneutic scholars maintain that everyday moments are always interpretive acts encompassing the socio-historical contexts of the moment (Moules, Field, McCaffrey, & Laing, 2015). Further still, methodological tools from hermeneutics recognise people as beings shaped by the conditions in which they are previously exposed and presently situated (Dilthey & Jameson, 1972).

Gadamer (1989) argues that people have a "historically effected consciousness" and that they are situated in particular temporalities and spatialities that shape that consciousness (p. 301). Similarly, understandings of habitus as a classifying structure suggest that the social world is located within individuals (Lizardo, 2009) and so, I undertake a research process attuned to the multiplicity of

situated knowledges (Harding, 2004; Haraway, 1988) and how these knowledges relate to the idea of sustainability as a means of responding to the research questions.

My hermeneutic methodology considers that understanding is enabled and made meaningful by the prior experiences and knowledge the person receiving the message brings to the interpretative act (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005). Being open to the subjectivities that influence the interpretive acts of others is a challenge for this project and qualitative research more generally. Gadamer guides those seeking openness when he says “the important thing is to be aware of one’s own bias, so that the [discourse] can present itself in all its otherness and thus assert its own truth against one’s own fore-meanings” (2012, pp. 271-272). I take heed of Gadamer’s warning and acknowledge that my history as a sustainability educator and professional will influence my interpretive acts. Similarly, my positioning as an *individual* with identities of mother, Tasmanian local and woman (among the many others that I perform daily in varied fields) will influence how I interpret the stories shared with me by participants.

Gadamer’s ideas are reminiscent of the practice of reflexivity. He suggests that biases are inevitable, but rather than shying away from them, we can name them up to the best of our ability and know them as our own theories. He challenges people to recognise their own prejudices and to explore how they influence processes of meaning-making (Gadamer, 1989, p. 273). I acknowledge that the analysis presented in this thesis is my interpretation and that this has been informed by the situated knowledge that I bring to the research. In the following chapter, I detail how I sought to document and make visible my processes of interpretation reflexively.

In addition, I have used ideas from hermeneutics, questioning how concepts of sustainability are relevant in the everyday “taken-for-grantedness” of being-in-the-

world (Moules, Field, McCaffrey, & Laing, 2015). That is, how does sustainability resonate with people in their daily lives? And what's more, how is the *taken-for-grantedness* of the social world reflected in these enactments?

As Gadamer (1977) notes, social life is enabled by the uncritical acceptance of assumptions in the interactions between speaker and receiver. As outlined in Chapter 2, discourses of sustainability make various assumptions about the people to which they speak to, and speak about. In this research study, I challenge the assumed interpretations of sustainability that the speaker (primarily middle class policy makers) intended, and what is received by subjects of these discourses.

To do this, I sought to converse with people who I perceived to be disengaged from discourses of sustainability. Hermeneutics is well suited to this aim because it requires relationships to be recognised as complex, dynamic, contextual and historically situated (McCaffrey & Moules, 2016). McCaffrey and Moules (2016) quote Nietzsche's claim that "great problems are to be encountered in the street" (1881/1982, p. 78). For individuals, something is at stake in everyday interactions. My aim is to explore how concepts relevant to sustainability are present in the lives of everyday people and in the everydayness of people's lives (Research Objective 1).

I have used hermeneutics to guide my application of methods and analysis of results to answer a research inquiry framed by Bourdieu's understanding of habitus. There are discrete advantages in situating Bourdieu's theoretical concepts with a hermeneutic methodology to undertake this research. As noted above, hermeneutics offers concepts that assist in making sense of how discourse and the act of interpretation is always present in our interactions and being-in-the-world, while Bourdieu offers concepts that emphasise the dialectic between the social world and

the body. This dialectic refers to the toing and froing between the social world and the body, where each influences the others becoming.

There are epistemological and ontological similarities between Bourdieu's concepts and the hermeneutic tradition that align with the objectives of this study. The framing of truth is one such example. Bourdieu maintains that truth is never entirely discernible, in the sense that interactions expose a certain truth of the intersubjectivity contained in an interaction, but that this is only ever true for that interaction (Inghilleri, 2005). This is the dialectical and ever-morphing character of habitus in fields. Similarly, hermeneutics frames truth as possible and perceptible through the process of interpretation. Yet, the act of interpreting changes depending upon the context and perspective of the person engaged in interpreting. So what is true in one moment, may not necessarily be true in another. This similarly ties to the contextual nature of interpretations of sustainability. This research project makes the assumption that interpretations and enactments of sustainability will be different according to where an actor is socially located.

The focus of this research project is to understand better how interpretations of sustainability vary across social locations, which similarly aligns with the epistemological positioning of both Bourdieu and the tradition of hermeneutics. Both Bourdieu and hermeneutic scholars seek to engage with, and to understand, the social practices (Bourdieu) and discursive interactions (hermeneutics) of the everydayness of the social world (Bourdieu, 1984; Ingram, 1982; Moules, Field, McCaffrey, & Laing, 2015). In this project, I seek to describe and understand encounters with concepts of sustainability in the everydayness of people's lives (Research Objective 1).

Further still, Ingram (1982) draws attention to some of the differences between Bourdieu's work and the tradition of hermeneutics. Ingram (1982) considers how discourse is at the forefront of traditions of hermeneutics and how meaning is made through discursive interactions. For Bourdieu, interactions occur and meaning is made within and through social practices. In his work with habitus, Bourdieu moves away from a structuring and bounding agency in language, to consider instead the social practices that according to him, inevitably make up the experiences and actions of being-in-the-world. However, I do acknowledge that a research project conducted in the English language brings its own assumptions and frames to meaning-making. For example, a neo-Whorfian perspective claims that language structures possibilities for understanding, and critiques the English language for the embedded separations between people and nature (Björk, 2008).

A research project encompassing theoretical concepts developed by Bourdieu, combined with the hermeneutic tradition affords an analysis rich in interpretations and cognisant of the always socially located act of interpreting. In addition, this combination brings to the fore the role of the researcher in naming up how interpretations of the data came to be made, as well as to the importance of everyday activities in informing how the world is constructed. In respect to this project specifically, it is anticipated that inquiring into the everyday interactions in people's lives will give some insight into how discourses of sustainability are taken up by people in different social locations.

3.4 Summary

Bourdieu's theories, in conjunction with a hermeneutic methodology, provide a conceptual framework for my research that enable a nuanced way to consider,

firstly, how subjects are constituted and shaped by where they are socially located, and secondly, how it is that these locations influence how sustainability discourses are encountered and how concepts of sustainability expressed. While earlier applications of Bourdieu's work tended to view habitus as a 'structuring structure' (King, 2000), recent scholarship (Holt, 1998; Inghilleri, 2005; Mills, 2013; Reay, 1995, 2004) utilises Bourdieu's theories to better understand dialectical interactions between subjects and their worlds. In particular, ideas of cultural, social and economic capital offer insights into how subjects participate in concepts of sustainability in different ways. Concepts such as habitus and field provide an understanding of how individual dispositions of thought, feeling and judging are structured by located social practices. Concepts such as doxa highlight the complicit relations of power and legitimated ways of being that objectively order the social world.

Interpretations of the social world are continually made and unmade through the everyday experience, which Bourdieu calls habitus. Through the concept of habitus, Bourdieu connects experience to deeper layers of social space. The work of Soja allows for further analysis of the multiple overlapping layers through which space can and should be understood. Soja's trialectic of space reveals a dynamic and interconnected relationality of people with and in space. This way of thinking can be used to reveal how and why the social location of habitus is influential in approaches to questions of sustainability. In the following chapter, I discuss how Bourdieu's theories of habitus are put to work as method and applied in this study as an analytical framework.

Chapter 4

Research Design

In this chapter, I describe the research process used in this inquiry. I have structured this chapter to tell a story about *where* the study was located, *who* was involved, and how they came to be involved in the project. I go on to describe how people were involved and how this involvement was included in this thesis through my interpretations.

4.1 Locating the Study

This research project was located geographically in a small city in Australia, on the island state of Tasmania. While the nature of these research questions is applicable in any geographical location, there were distinct advantages in locating this study in Tasmania. Below, I draw on research to position Australia in discourses of sustainability, and then do the same for Tasmania. I make the argument that Tasmania, given its rich geopolitical history and contested environmental political legacy, affords unique opportunities to engage Tasmanians in conversations about concepts of sustainability.

4.1.1 National Context

Australia is rich in social, environmental and economic contexts that, in many ways, are at the heart of questions of sustainability. Geographically, Australia is a country that spans the entirety of a continent located in the southern hemisphere. There are approximately 7.69 million square kilometres of land inhabited by around 24.5 million people. Australia has a population density of approximately 2.8 people per square kilometre, one of the lowest population densities globally (World Bank Group, 2017).

While Australia has been inhabited by Aboriginal Australians for over 65,000 years, the continent was colonised by European settlers less than 250 years ago (Clarkson, Marwick, Wallis, Fullagar, & Jacobs, 2017). This history has informed how the Australian Government positions Australia's national interest in global and national conversations pertaining to questions of sustainability. For example, Banerjee (2000) identifies the colonialist, capitalist discourse in constructions of Australian nationhood. He suggests that this way of thinking has significantly informed the Jabiluka uranium mine project which sought to locate a uranium mine in a World Heritage Area (Kakadu National Park) and the home of the Mirrar people.

The economic imperative is at times evident in the constructions of what constitutes and/or challenges national sustainable development targets in Australia. Australia is a signatory to modern agreements such as the Paris Agreement and the Kyoto Protocol (Rajamani, 2016), yet remains an active resister to current international attempts to progress action on climate change (Obergassel et al., 2018). Decisions remain largely guided by what are perceived to be the economic interests of the nation (Dryzek, 1997; McGregor, 2004). Almost immediately after becoming

Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull rearticulated his position on renewable energy as a means of reducing carbon emissions from the perspective of what made economic sense for the country. In Turnbull's words:

Fancy proposing, without any idea of the cost of the abatement, the cost of proposing that 50% of energy had to come from renewables! What if that reduction in emissions you needed could come more cost-effectively from carbon storage, by planting trees, by soil carbon, by using gas, by using clean coal, by energy efficiency? (Readfearn, 2015, 18 September)

This quote showcases the prioritisation of economic rationalism in political decision making in Australia⁵. Discourses of sustainability that are prevalent in political fields tend to resonate more closely with neoliberal discourses of efficiency and technological innovations as the pathway to a sustainable future (Hobson, 2002), or as Janice Gross Stein (2001) terms, "the cult of efficiency".

4.1.2 Tasmanian Context

Tasmania is positioned at 41° south of the equator and is the only island state of Australia. The state covers a land area of over 68,000 km² of which half is currently in national or state reserves. Over 513 000 people live in Tasmania, with half of residents living in the greater Hobart precinct. The median age of Tasmanians is 40, and, the percentage of children under 15 years of age in the community is

⁵ Tony Abbott's recent high profile and profligate climate change denial provides further support of the continual economic rationalism in Australia, headlines have included *Tony Abbott dares us to reject evidence on climate, but reveals a coward* (Readfearn, 2017, 11 October), *Tony Abbott says climate change is 'probably doing good'* (Mathiesen, 2017, 10 October).

decreasing (from 22% in 1996 to 18% in 2014) (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015).

The three largest industries in Tasmania are health care and social assistance (12%), retail trade (11.3%), public administration and safety (9%), followed closely by education and training (8.9%), manufacturing (8.7%) and tourism (8.6%) (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013). These statistics show Tasmania to be a diverse state for employment including both working class and middle class occupations (Sheppard & Biddle, 2015).

The four main industries that contribute to the Tasmanian economy include mining and mineral processing, agriculture, tourism and forestry (Department of Treasury and Finance, 2017). However, the collapse of Gunns Limited saw a massive reduction in the size and scale of the forestry industry in 2012 (Beresford, 2015). The company entered into voluntary administration after a 10-year pursuit to build a hotly contested pulp mill in the Tamar Valley of Tasmania. Forestry practices have long been at the heart of Tasmanian environmental debates and have gained global recognition (Sewell, Dearden, & Dumbrell, 1989). Historically, Tasmania has been a global leader in environmental politics and the birthplace of the world's first Green's Party, *The United Tasmania Group*, formed in response to the flooding of Lake Pedder (Beresford, 2015). With this rich political history, rooted in environmental debates, the Tasmanian body politic has become polarised about anything 'environmental'. Stratford, Armstrong and Jaskolski (2003, p. 463) document this polarisation in their study of two communities in Tasmania:

Long-standing tensions between (a) conservationists and developers, (b) right- and left-wing political groups [and specifically in local community contexts]

(c) those who would enlarge the brief of local government to embrace social and environmental planning and those who would constrain local governments' role to asset management. These tensions have been manifest in protests of anger in public meetings (especially, but not exclusively, about forestry).

Tasmania's social and political environment makes the state a rich area for research on competing conceptualisations of sustainability. As suggested by Stratford, Armstrong and Jaskolski (2003), the Tasmanian population encompasses a diverse spectrum of people who hold potentially contrasting values and beliefs. This study includes people who identify as neutral in environmental debates, as well as a range of people who identified personal passion about environmental/sustainability issues (either for or against). A study that includes people from a range of social locations provides a rich source of contrast for exploring how sustainability may be constructed.

4.1.3 Employing Social Location

In this section I explain how ideas of social location are employed in this thesis. Social location is a way of positioning an individual in the world. I have drawn on Bourdieu's understandings of habitus (1990a, 1990b), class condition and social conditioning (1984), Inghilleri's (2005) interpretations of Bourdieu's work in this area, Malpas' (2016) work on connections of place to understanding, and also on Anthias' (2013) work on translocation. I use these sources to inform how I deploy social location in the research project. However, my use of social location is most reminiscent of Bourdieu's concept of habitus. I use social location to broadly situate

participants in space and to explore the dialectical relations between their objective positioning and subjective dispositions (Bourdieu, 1984, 1990a). The word ‘location’ is not confined to physical geography but includes cultural, social, economic, gender, and cultural geographies (Corbett, Vibert, Green, & Rowe, 2016).

While I do not strictly use the lens of social class, Bourdieu’s work in this area has informed my interpretations of what it means to be located in the social world. At times, I deploy understandings of a working class and middle class habitus in similar ways to Bourdieu’s usage⁶. In his description of how class is constructed, Bourdieu (1984) notes, “social class is not defined by a property...but by the structure of relations between all the pertinent properties which gives its specific value to each of them and to the effects they exert on practices” (p. 106). In this extract, Bourdieu draws attention to the interconnections between objective classifying properties. It is how these geographies are arranged and come together that provides the foundations for an embodied, relational practice he calls habitus. For example, categories of age, gender, and ethnicity are embodied in different ways in different people; Bourdieu argues that practices and performances are not necessarily predictable, but that they are regulated by the milieu of experiences afforded by the meshing of geographies.

⁶ For a thorough discussion of Bourdieu’s understanding and deployment of social class, see Weininger (2002, pp.122-127). Weininger (2002, p.122) notes that Bourdieu’s determination of class is based upon three axes: The first (and most important) axis differentiates locations in the occupational system according to the total volume of capital (economic and cultural) possessed by a person; The second differentiates positions within classes based upon the set of available resources and powers (capitals); The third relates to the changes experienced over time in the volume and composition of capital. However, as noted by Bourdieu (1984, pp. 258-259) “...we can speak of a class fraction although it is nowhere possible to draw a demarcation line such that we can find no one on either side who possesses all the properties most frequent on one side and none of the properties most frequent on the other”. Weininger goes on to argue “...hence, that within “this universe of continuity,” the identification of discrete class (and fraction) locations amounts to no more than a heuristic convenience” (2002, p. 126). In this research, I use demographic data collected from participants on household income, occupation and education to inform my understanding and deployment of class in the study.

Inghilleri (2005) asserts that classificatory schemes were used by Bourdieu because of “his interest in how knowledge and power [were] distributed within and between social individuals and collectivities” (p. 135). In a similar way, I draw on the demographic information provided by participants in conjunction with their stories to construct a picture of how they are located in social space. I do this as a way of thinking about how ideas of sustainability are understood across social spaces. However, in any kind of naming practice, Bourdieu (1990) asserts that “classes on paper risk being apprehended as real groups” (p. 128). In this sense, I take the idea of habitus as a means of going beyond classificatory schemes and I also take further inspiration from Malpas’ (2016) considerations of place in hermeneutics, as well as Anthias’ (2013) work on translocation to deepen my understanding of what social location means in the context of this project.

Anthias’ (2013) way of thinking about social location encompasses the permeable and somewhat fluid nature of Bourdieu’s habitus. However, she goes on to include, or at least to consider, the complex temporal and spatial networks in which individuals are entwined in a globalised society (Anthias, 2014a, 2014b; Appadurai, 1996). Questions related to concepts of sustainability are complexly entangled in local, national and transnational fields (Agyeman & Evans, 2004; Dryzek, 1997; Jacobs, 1999; Plumwood, 2002). In this sense, I borrow from the concept of translocation, the connecting and interconnecting of complex spatial and temporal relations, in my understanding of social location. Anthias’ (2013) translocational lens focuses on the “intersections of different social structures and processes, including transnational ones, giving importance to the broader social context and to temporality to position” (p. 131). I draw from translocation, a focus on social locations, rather than a focus on groups. She notes that,

Our 'location' is embedded in relations of hierarchy within a multiplicity of specific situational and conjunctural spheres...locations relate to stratification (at local, national and transnational fields), within a contextual and chronographic context, i.e. they inhabit a 'real time and place' context (p. 130).

The idea of location connected to real time and place is reminiscent of Malpas' (2016) thinking on 'placedness' (Malpas, 2006). In the context of hermeneutic analysis, Malpas (2016) highlights the connections between place and understanding. He argues that "place and understanding are intimately connected" (p. 2), that someone builds understanding through their inhabited place in the world. He contends that there is "an intimate belonging-together of place and thinking, of place and experience, of place and the very possibility of appearance, of presence, of being" (p. 3). Within traditions of hermeneutics, recognition of the 'placedness' of understanding is paramount in interpretations of how this understanding came to be in the first place (Malpas, 2016). Echoing Bourdieu (1990a) with respect to habitus as a concept that is "at once a system of models for the production of practices and a system of models for the perception and appreciation of practices...express[ing] the social position in which it was constructed" (p. 131).

Drawing on these theoretical ideas, I have conceptualised participants' positioning in the social world through a lens of social location. This framing offers an analytical tool with discrete benefits to the objective of my inquiry. Questions relevant to sustainability embody complex spatial and temporal contexts. An analytical tool that emphasises ideas of *location*, rather than *categorisation*, affords the project some interesting ways of understanding how people imagine themselves in

the world, and at the same time, giving me as an interpreter, a way of imagining them in it as well.

4.1.4 Engaging People

A hermeneutic inquiry emphasises the need to engage participants who are the best people to respond to the topic of the research (Moules, Field, McCaffrey, & Laing, 2015). With this in mind, I undertook purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990; Sandelowski, 1995) and approached a community organisation located in the city to discuss opportunities for speaking with people about the research project.

The first objective of the study was to investigate how social location influences engagement with concepts of sustainability. I purposively chose participants from diverse social locations because I assume that a person's location in social space is a way to include a diversity of perspectives. Bourdieu lends support for this assumption when he says,

...there will be different or even antagonistic points of view [among participants in different contexts], since points of view depend on the point from which they are taken, since the vision that every agent has of space depends on his or her position in that space (1977, p. 130).

At the same time, Bourdieu (1977, p. 128) reminds researchers that, “[contexts] on paper risk being apprehended as real groups.” I assume here that social locations do not determine or infer who a person is, rather, the aim of recruiting from a range of social contexts was to investigate, represent and reflect the complexity and diversity of ways in which sustainability might be interpreted across social locations.

With this in mind, I remained cognisant of how habitus is socially located and how capital influences approaches to concepts of sustainability.

The recruitment of participants was managed with the support of a Neighbourhood House. Neighbourhood Houses began in Tasmania in the late 1970s, funded by the Department of Health and Human Services under its Community Support Program. Neighbourhood Houses offer a range of programs based on community resources and need (Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.). Savage and Perry (2014) from the Association of Neighbourhood Houses and Learning Centres claim, “Neighbourhood Houses are effectively engaging disadvantaged people and those at risk of social isolation, including people with disability, older persons and concession cardholders (p. 5)”. Deploying Bourdieu’s understandings of social class, Neighbourhood Houses tend to engage working class people (Bourdieu, 1977). The Neighbourhood House has two physical sites located in two of the most disadvantaged⁷ neighbourhoods of the city (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011). The combined population of the suburbs is approximately 5,000 (ABS, 2017) and according to Facebook, the Neighbourhood House is ‘liked’ by 954 people (as at November 2, 2017). The organisers distributed flyers about the research project at the Neighbourhood House sites (Appendix A). I acknowledge that working closely with the Neighbourhood House in this way limited who was, and was not included in the study.

Recruitment material was included in an email sent via the organisation to member lists and posters displayed in the houses. The material was designed with the

⁷ I use this term to refer to economic disadvantage, based on reported figures from the City of Launceston, Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage, 2016 (available from <https://atlas.id.com.au/launceston/maps/socio-economic-disadvantage>)

intention of using language that was neutral to environmental debates and that excluded the term ‘sustainability’.

The language used in recruitment material was sensitive to issues pertaining to the environment and sustainability. There were two potential scenarios that I actively sought to remedy through the discursive framing of the recruitment material. Firstly, using the term ‘sustainability’ had the potential to attract people actively engaged in hegemonic sustainability thinking. These people were not the *best* people to include in the research, given my interest was to speak with people who were marginalised from/in discourses of sustainability. Secondly, there was the potential that recruitment material naming sustainability could alienate people who might interpret my work as a study with a purely environmental agenda. In light of this, the study was communicated using the title: *You and the Future: Exploring Social, Environmental and Economic Futures*.

Interested people then contacted me via phone or email for more information, and if they were agreeable, to organise a suitable time to meet. I also utilised the recruitment technique of snowballing to connect with participants who were not affiliated with the community organisation (Ritchie, Lewis, Elam, Tennant, & Rahim, 2003). I did this to expand the diversity of people and social contexts included in the project. Based on the assumed representation of low socio-economic status (SES) participants from the community organisation (I expand on my justification for this assumption in section 4.1.4), I decided to include participants from a more privileged socio-economic context (middle class habitus). Using the networks of the research team, I contacted individuals via email and phone and directly invited them into the research project.

4.2 Methods

People were invited to participate in a focus group and a semi-structured interview at times and locations convenient them. The ontological and epistemological positioning of the study, the research questions and the methodology meant that a qualitative approach to the inquiry was most appropriate. In the inquiry, I sought to engage with questions of ‘how’ and ‘why’ people engaged with concepts relevant to sustainability (Ritchie et al., 2003).

More specifically, hermeneutic scholars hold that methods should be guided by the topic of the research. My interest in accessing and understanding people’s experiences invited methods that were dialogical (Moules, Field, McCaffrey, & Laing, 2015). Following this, I used qualitative methods including focus groups and semi-structured interviews to investigate the research questions and conducted all data collection myself. A summary of the methods I used is shown below, followed by a description and justification.

Table 1. Outline of methods including data to be collected, guiding literature and documents required

Method	Data Collected	Guiding Literature	Relevant Documents
Focus group	Participant verbatim, field notes	Onwuegbuzie, 2009; Orvik, Larun, Berland, & Ringsberg, 2013; Longhurst, 2010	-Consent form (Appendix B) -Question sheet (Appendix C) -Demographic survey (Appendix D)
Semi-structured interview	Participant verbatim, field notes	Moules, Field, McCaffrey, & Laing, 2015; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Heisley & Levy, 1991; Thompson & Coskuner-Balli, 2007;	-Consent form (Appendix E) -Interview schedule (Appendix F)

4.2.1 Focus Groups

Focus groups are a research method that bring people together, who may or may not know each other, to talk about a particular topic. Groups usually consist of six to twelve people and are flexible in duration (Longhurst, 2010). Focus groups were included in the research project for a number of reasons. First, they enabled access to multiple voices in a way that was logistically possible given time considerations. Second, in the group setting, the voice of an individual was negotiated and intersected by the voices of others, providing opportunities for co-construction of knowledge (Longhurst, 2010; Marková, Linell, Grossen, & Salazar Orvig, 2007). Critiques of focus groups as a method include the potential for participants to feel pressured to agree with the majority (Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech, & Zoran, 2009) and the potential that some people will dominate the conversations (Fern, 2001; Greenhaum, 1998; Marková et al., 2007). In consequence, people who are less forthcoming may feel pressured to either agree or remain silent during discussions (Fern, 2001; Marková et al., 2007). I tried to mediate these concerns by offering opportunities to all group members to speak and monitoring dominant participants.

Focus groups reflected my epistemological position, that meaning is socially constructed. Focus groups, while arguably an artificial 'set up' of a natural conversation, afford opportunities for social constructions of understanding through group interactions (Marková et al., 2007; Paterson & Higgs, 2005).

Further to this, I used the focus groups as an opportunity to establish rapport with participants and increase the likelihood of their participation in the semi-structured interviews (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008). The conversations from each of the focus groups were also used to inform questions for the semi-

structured interviews. I drew on research from ethnography that suggests language from an outsider's perspective can be different to the common language used by people from different cultural spaces (Gobo, 2008; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Spradley, 1979). In response to this, the discursive practices of participants in each of the groups informed the language I used with them in the semi-structured interviews. For example, I adopted language used in the Mothers' Group focus group to talk about climate change "stuff" with Heidi in the semi-structured interview.

In conducting the focus groups, I wanted to ensure that the data was of the best quality possible. For this reason, I drew upon the six situational factors identified by Vicsek (2007) to influence the quality of data ascertained through focus groups. These included interactional factors, the environment, time factors, the content, personal characteristics of the participants, and the characteristics of the researcher (Orvik, Larun, Berland, & Ringsberg, 2013). As the environment was identified as one of the six situational factors, I negotiated the location of the sessions with participants. In addition, I was aware that time factors, such as time of day and the duration of the focus group can influence participation. Further to this, I considered the content and the structure of the engagement (i.e., question sequence). I engaged participants in conversations about what would work best for them regarding time, day and session length. I also had extended conversations with the supervisory team regarding sequencing of questions. Focus groups tended to last between 60 and 180 minutes.

The remaining situational factors considered the interactions between researchers and participants as well as between participants (Orvik, Larun, Berland, & Ringsberg, 2013; Vicsek, 2007). I tried to be aware of the energy I brought into a room and self-monitored my interactions with participants. I always tried to present

professionally, while remaining warm, approachable and open (Moules, Field, McCaffrey, & Laing, 2015). Orvik, Larun, Berland and Ringsberg (2013) also identify professionalism and knowledge of the subject area of the facilitator as a significant influence to the quality of focus group data. I was particularly cognisant of the ‘knowledges’ I enacted during sessions because Research Objective 1 of the study was to explore participants interpretations of concepts relevant to sustainability. For example, I used reflective questions in response to comments regarding what global warming actually was. Such as: “Yeah, you hear so many things, what do you think it’s about?” I tried to challenge relations of power in myself presenting as an external ‘expert’ and participants as ‘unknowing’ (Elwood & Martin, 2000; Marková et al., 2007). A full question schedule is included in Appendix C; However, a sample of questions from the schedule is shown below.

- What are likely to be some of the most important issues facing Tasmania in 2025?
- What are likely to be the most important issues in the World in the 2nd half of this century?
- What will life be like in your town/suburb/region in 2100?
- In what ways is life different to life 30 years ago?
- How would everyone think about the future of the next generation?
And the future of the generation after that?

Many people were generous with their time, thoughts and their sharing of themselves with me. I wanted to reciprocate this generosity and so, in moments where I felt that I could give back, I did (Moules, Field, McCaffrey, & Laing, 2015). This often occurred through sharing my understandings about topics from the focus group,

or in answering questions about the University. In addition, at the end of the analysis stages of the research, I went back to the Neighbourhood House with a summary of findings of the research.

4.2.2 Semi-structured Interviews

At the end of focus group discussions, I gathered the names and numbers of people who were interested in continuing on the research journey with a semi-structured interview. Semi-structured interviews are a type of interview technique that encourages interviewers to explore and follow lines of inquiry presented in a dialogue with interviewees (Moules, Field, McCaffrey, & Laing, 2015). Interviewers are guided by a series of questions, however, emphasis in the interview is on picking up themes that arise in the moment. The interview schedule is included in Appendix F. A sample of the interview questions from the schedule is shown below.

- What does a quality or good, fulfilling life mean for you? What does this look like?
- What is important to you? Do you feel like you have enough time for these things?
- What is our role in the climate change/global warming stuff?
- What are some of the significant or defining moments that you can recall in your life so far?

Unlike many other methodological fields, Moules, Field, McCaffrey, and Laing (2015) argue that there is no such thing as discrete hermeneutic interview techniques. Instead, they refer to the ‘craft’ of interviewing and the achievement of good interviews. They argue that this is accomplished through a thoughtful, open and deliberative intention to create space for understandings to emerge.

The interviewer's 'craft' is crucial in the conduct of a good interview. I drew upon the work of Kvale and Brinkmann (2007) to inform the characteristics I used in the interviews. They describe good interviewers as: knowledgeable, structuring, clear, gentle, sensitive, open, steering, critical, remembering and interpreting (pp. 166-167). In recognition of the interviewer as the 'key research instrument' in generating rich material, I engaged in a number of 'mock interviews' with peers and members of the research team to practice my interviewer skills (Moules, McCaffrey, Field, & Laing, 2015, p. 89).

I drew upon research and techniques utilised in phenomenological research to develop research questions. For example, I put phenomenological techniques to work in the construction of questions (Maggs-Rapport, 2000; Thompson & Coskuner-Balli, 2007). For instance, I constructed experiential questions based on the conversations I was having with the participant, such as: 'Can you tell me about one particular experience when you were being sustainable, whatever this might mean for you?' I did this to avoid a frame that asked a participant to answer with abstractions or feelings, such as: 'Can you tell me what sustainability might look like in your life?'

At times during the interviews, I chose to disclose aspects of myself. As Sennett reminds researchers, "To probe, the interviewer cannot be stonily impersonal; he or she has to give something of himself or herself in order to merit an open response" (2004, p. 37). This was done intentionally, as a way to offer that I knew something about the topic or that I could empathise with the experiences participants shared with me.

Prior to the interview, participants completed a consent form (Appendix E) and a short demographic survey to help in characterising their locations in social space (Appendix D) (Carr, Gotlieb, Lee, & Shah, 2012; Granfield, 1991). At the

conclusion of interviews, I took down the best way to contact each of the participants to arrange member checks of transcripts (Koelsch, 2013; Seidman, 2006).

4.3 Participants of the Study

A number of the people who I contacted from researcher networks were interested in participating. In addition, I was contacted by a number of people from within the Neighbourhood House, who expressed an interest in the research project. Within the Neighbourhood House, there were a number of small groups of people organised around common interests, such as crafts groups, mothers' groups, cooking groups, among many others. The people who contacted me, did so on behalf of one or more of these organised groups and communicated the interest of the group to be involved in my study.

Accorded with Moules, the research study was not guided by the need to include a set number of participants; rather, "hermeneutic research is not validated by numbers, but by the completeness of examining the topic under study and the fullness and depth to which the interpretation extends understanding" (2002, p. 14). I worked to include a sample size that was conducive to acquiring a new and richly textured understanding of experience (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006; Sandelowski, 1995). At the core, hermeneutic research is about context and the acknowledgement that phenomena cannot exist uncontextualised (Moules, Field, McCaffrey, & Laing, 2015). A summary of the demographic information provided by participants is included on the following page, followed by accounts that describe the setting of the focus groups, some information on each of the participants and some of the notable dynamics between/amongst participants. The following group descriptions were put

together after conducting focus groups and interviews, based on information from my researcher notes and from the conversations between participants and myself.

Table 2. Summary of demographic information provided by participants⁸

Participant	Age	Gender	Employment*	Household Income (\$)	Housing**	Relationship***	No. of Children	Highest Level of Education Attained
<i>Philippine Group</i>								
Mary	40 - 49	F	NEL	50,000 - 69,999	O/M	M/D	1	Bachelor Degree
Fiona	18 - 29	F	NEL	-	O/M	M/D	1	Bachelor Degree
Bella	30 - 39	F	1 - 39	30,000 - 49,999	Renting	M/D	1	Bachelor Degree
Rosa	30 - 39	F	NEL	-	Renting	D/S	2	Grade 11
Poppy	30 - 39	F	1 - 39	30,000 - 49,999	O/M	M/D	1	Postgraduate
Emma	60+	F	Retired	-	O/M	M/D	0	Postgraduate
<i>Over 65s Group</i>								
Tom	60+	M	Retired	10,000 - 29,999	O/M	M/D	0	Grade 7-9
Susan	60+	F	Retired	10,000 - 29,999	O/M	M/D	0	Grade 7-9
Wendy	60+	F	Retired	-	-	W	0	-
Sally	60+	F	Retired	-	O/M	D/S	0	-
Sherryl	60+	F	Retired	10,000 - 29,999	O/M	W	0	Grade 12
Patricia	60+	F	1 - 39	10,000 - 29,999	O/M	W	0	Vocational Cert.
<i>Men's Group</i>								
Bob	60+	M	Retired	10,000 - 29,999	O/M	D/S	0	Grade 10
<i>Mothers' Group</i>								
Heidi	18 - 29	F	NENL	10,000 - 29,000	O/M	M/D	2	Vocational Cert.
Jessie	40 - 49	F	1 - 39	10,000 - 29,999	Renting	S	2	Vocational Cert.
Sandy	40 - 49	F	1 - 39	-	O/M	M/D	1	Vocational Cert.

⁸ Demographic information was collected voluntarily from participants and not all participants chose to complete the survey. Only participants that completed the survey have been included in the table. Questions that were not answered have been marked with a -.

Participant	Age	Gender	Employment*	Household Income (\$)	Housing**	Relationship***	No. of Children	Highest Level of Education Attained
<i>Higher Income Cohort</i>								
Roger	60+	M	>40	150,000+	O/M	M/D	0	Postgraduate
Clara	60+	F	1 - 39	130,000 - 149,000	O/M	M/D	0	Vocational Cert.
Winston	40 - 49	M	>40	150,000+	O/M	M/D	2	Postgraduate
Henry	40 - 49	M	>40	130,000 - 149,000	O/M	M/D	2	Postgraduate
Sarah	18 - 29	F	1 - 39	130,000 - 149,000	Living at home	S	1	Grade 12

***Employment**

NEL= Not employed, looking for work

1-39 = Employed, working 1-39 hrs per week

NENL = Not employed, NOT looking for work

>40 = Employed, working more than 40 hrs per week

****Housing**

O/M = owned or mortgage

*****Relationship**

M/D = Married or de facto

D/S = Divorced or separated

W = Widowed

S = Single

4.3.1 The Mothers' Group

The group consisted of all women, each of whom had at least one child in her care. The focus group session occurred in the morning and was organised around the normal schedule of group activities. I shared a cup of tea with the group while morning tea was prepared for the children. Then we all sat down to 'start the session'. Margaret was present at the mothers' group as she enjoys the opportunity to tend to the children and set up craft activities. Her son was in his early 20s at the time and she reminisced during the session on moments from his childhood. Present at the session was Jessie, a lady in her early 40s and her son who was around two years old. Jessie was a regular attendee of the group and in the Neighbourhood House more generally. I learned quickly that all of the women in the group were socially connected in some way. Jessie's older sister was present, and while she did not have any children attending, she was a regular attendee of the group and at the Neighbourhood House more generally. Sandy was in her late 40s and attends the group with her grandson. She uses the space as a social meeting point and a relaxed place to take her grandchildren once a week to give her daughter a break. Her daughter Heidi also came along specially to attend the focus group. Sandy and Jessie are connected through their older children who were dating at the time. Heidi, Sandy's daughter was in her early 20s and had both her sons at the session. Heidi seemed somewhat uncomfortable with me, but after spending some time talking and helping with the children, her anxiety seemed to ease. Heidi, Jessie and Sandy were the main participants during the session with Mary coming in and out as the children would allow or if a topic was of particular interest to her. Jessie's sister also entered and exited depending on the topic of conversation.

4.3.2 The Over 65s Group

Before the session started, I met Sally, a relatively new member of the group and partially retired. Sally and I had a cup of tea together while waiting for the other group members. During this time, Sally shared some of her recent experiences that she had had with the group, including making straw men for a local heritage site. Participants began arriving, all taking their place at the elongated table. Patricia was one of the oldest group members and appeared from observation as the matriarch of the group. Patricia, Wendy and Sherryl were widows within the group and shared a common understanding between them and typically agreed with each other. Sherryl was a dominant force within the group and would often be the first to speak up. Wendy was also keen to be involved in the discussions and came along weekly with friends Alfred and Donna; the only married couple that attended the group. While she said little, Donna's gestures such as nods and quiet utterances affirmed other participants and were significant for the group as a whole. Alfred, the only male of the group, was expressive and a key contributor to many of the conversations.

4.3.3 The Philippine Group

Philippine born Emma established a group specifically to connect with emigrated Philippine people a number of years ago. She moved to Tasmania originally with her ex-husband. Emma expressed feelings of loneliness, isolation and a lack of acceptance by the Tasmanian community. In response to this, she sought connections with people who shared her culture and her understandings and appreciations of life. Bella brought her husband along to look after the children present in the group so that she and the others could concentrate on the focus group. Many of the women had children, however, unlike the mothers' group, this was not

the core reason for coming together. Poppy expressed her appreciation to Emma for having established the group and enabling connections with others emigrated from the Philippines. Poppy had been in Tasmania for three years with her husband. She had met her husband while he had been in the Philippines and after a number of years travelling between the countries, she decided to move to Australia. They have since given birth to a daughter who was present at the session. Mary lived just around the corner from Poppy and accompanied her to the session. Mary had a three-year-old son and a 19-year-old stepson. She and her husband had recently finished building their family home in a suburb not far away from the Neighbourhood House. Bella was of a similar age to Mary and had also been in Tasmania for a similar length of time after meeting her Australian husband in the Philippines. Bella was one of the older members of the group and had a son around two-years-old. Although she and her husband lived quite a distance away, Bella was willing to travel by bus weekly to meet up to attend the group. Lilah too lived a large distance away and arrived shortly after the session had begun due to travel time. Fiona was the youngest member of the group and also had a son of similar age to Bella's. Rosa was in her 40s and seemed unsettled and nervous by my presence initially; however, after reassuring the group that there were no right answers, any uneasiness seemed to dissipate.

4.3.4 The Men's Group

The Men's Group operated out of a hall and a recently acquired shipping container. The group brought men together while they participated in projects to create material objects as a service to the community. The group was first initiated by Roy many years ago as a fathers group when he became the primary carer of his children. Through the support of the Neighbourhood House, Roy established a group

to connect with other men in similar situations. Over time and funding cycles, the group has changed and was now described as a Men's Shed⁹. Roy, Paul, Bob and John were present for the session. It was a sunny day and the session was held outside on a picnic table after we made a cup of tea together. The men within the group did not disclose any connection with each other outside of the Men's Shed. Paul was in his 50s and a father of four. Paul positioned himself on many occasions as expert during the session and was deferred to often by group members as being 'the person who knows the most about that'. Bob was in his late 60s and was the considered voice of the group. Roy was less forthcoming with his opinion but played an important role as the affirming voice for the group. While he was present for the session, John did not contribute verbally, however often demonstrated agreement or disagreement with his body language through head nods and utterances.

4.3.5 The Higher Income Cohort

The session was held at a local café, owned by Clara, one of the participants. Clara had lived in the city where the research was conducted all of her life and was the only female at the session aside from myself. Clara's husband Roger also attended. Roger was in his early 60s and was keen to contribute throughout the session. Henry was a local police investigator and a father with young children who lived around the corner from Clara and Roger, however was unaware of this until the session. Henry was a reserved but respected presence in the group, often deferred to by other participants to give his opinion. Winston, a father with two teenagers was a

⁹ Men's sheds are a recently new phenomenon in Australia, with few sheds in existence prior to 2002 (Golding, Foley & Brown, 2008). Men's sheds are located in community settings and, "provide a safe and busy environment where men can find many of these things in an atmosphere of old-fashioned mateship. And, importantly, there is no pressure. Men can just come and have a yarn and a cuppa if that is all they're looking for" (Australian Men's Shed Association, n.d.).

dominant voice during the session; he led conversations confidently and was often the first person to respond to a question.

The table below indicates participant's involvement in the study. All participants, except Sarah, participated in the focus group, and all participants, except Winston, completed the focus group first.

Table 3. Summary of participant involvement

Group	Participant	Focus Group	Semi-structured Interview
Mothers' Group	Sandy	X	
	Heidi	X	X
	Jessie	X	
	Margaret	X	
Over 65s Group	Sally	X	
	Wendy	X	
	Sherryl	X	
	Patricia	X	X
	Tom	X	X
	Susan	X	
Higher Income Cohort	Clara	X	X
	Roger	X	X
	Henry	X	
	Winston	X	X
	Sarah		X
Men's Group	Roy	X	
	Paul	X	X
	Bob	X	X
	John	X	
Philippine Group	Rosa	X	X
	Fiona	X	X
	Poppy	X	X
	Mary	X	X
	Emma	X	
	Bella	X	X

4.4 Analysis

The interviews were transcribed and linked with my field notes created during and initially after the sessions in NVIVO. Data including transcripts and my researcher journal were stored and analysed in the program. Throughout the project, I

maintained a research journal, providing a conscious record of my reflections and thinking.

4.4.1 Positioning the Researcher

I used a research journal to capture my thoughts and my positionality throughout the project, particularly during analysis and interpretation. Reflexivity is a core component of the hermeneutics methodology (Dilthey, 1976). In Gadamer's words:

As a hermeneutical task, understanding includes a reflective dimension from the very beginning. Understanding is not a mere reproduction of knowledge, that is, it is not a mere act of repeating the same thing. Rather, understanding is aware of the fact that it is indeed an act of repeating (1977, p. 43).

In this quote, Gadamer highlights the importance of knowing the self as a researcher, in order to make visible (to the best of one's ability) the categories of thought that are 'put to work' during any process. More recently, Moules, McCaffrey, Field and Laing (2015) suggests reflexivity is one of the signature features of philosophical hermeneutics.

Reflexivity concerns the positioning of the researcher ontologically, epistemologically and axiologically (Berger, 2013; Owton & Allen-Collinson, 2013; Supriya, 2001; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). It is a practice that explores how it is that the self influences, interprets and conveys information, and the voice of others (Berger, 2013; Finlay & Gough, 2008).

Practices of reflexivity seek to challenge taken-for-granted researcher knowledge. I sought to make conscious how social, cultural, political and environmental contexts influenced what I was understanding and interpreting throughout the project (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; England, 1994). In many ways, I tried to open up for inspection the ways in which my own habitus influenced how I came to make decisions in the project and how I came to form interpretations of the data (Bourdieu, 1984, 1990a).

I began this process by reflecting on, and challenging my own assumptions and beliefs. The aims of the research demanded that I was open to the interpretations of sustainability of others; therefore, an awareness of what my understandings of sustainability are, and how they have been formed was important. A greater insight into my positionality afforded more nuanced and sensitive interviewing practices (England, 1994; Moules, Field, McCaffrey, & Laing, 2015).

During the development of the research questions, I reflected on my understandings of sustainability and began to consider more deeply the social, cultural and political structures that had influenced them. This included reflecting on my operationalised interpretations of sustainability as a result of my work in a large organisation as a Sustainability Officer.

During data collection and interpretation, a three-part log was utilised as one of many strategies for ‘doing’ reflexivity (Berger, 2013). While this process is suggested for use during the analysis of encounters, I found it useful during the preparation of methods materials (i.e., interview schedules), as well as throughout the stages of data collection and interpretation. The process involved writing or reviewing documents (such as a transcription or interview script), considering the text for meaning, and recognising this meaning as an interpretation and questioning what

assumptions that interpretation held. This process enabled me to ‘see’ and question my own rationale for including certain questions on interview schedules, as well as to ask why I was ‘seeing’ certain things when with participants. For example, a reflection that I made after an interview:

The house was very new and very 'normal' in style. Brick, garage, separate lounge with a combined dining, kitchen sitting area. I was amazed at the 6 buckets of toys lined up against the window in the sitting area. Cartoons were on in the background. The heat pump was on above our heads...

The initial observation shown above was taken from one of the first interviews conducted in the research project. This reflection shows how my own interpretations of sustainability caused me to ‘see’ certain things. During my candidature I worked part time as a Sustainability Officer, which focused heavily on operational efficiencies and natural resource use. While my understanding of sustainability theoretically extends beyond a quantitative measure of natural resource consumption, during the interview, I documented what was familiar and comfortable to me in relation to understandings of sustainability. Practicing reflexivity assisted in ‘seeing’ when I was slipping into this operational mindset.

In addition to reflexive documenting, hermeneutic researchers advocate writing interpretive conjectures during analysis and interpretation (Moules, Field, McCaffrey, & Laing, 2015). Such conjectures take form as preliminary ideas and playful musings of transcripts in writing. I utilised this approach in memos (described in more detail in section 4.3) as well as undertook more traditional means of working

with qualitative data such as coding (Appendix G is an example of first cycle codes interpreted from the data).

4.4.2 Working with the Data

In hermeneutic research, the process of analysis is synonymous with interpretation (Moules, Field, McCaffrey, & Laing, 2015). This process is messy, undefined, iterative and emergent. It involves multifaceted engagement with the transcripts, the literature and current research on the topic and researcher interpretations (Moules, Field, McCaffrey, & Laing, 2015). Arguably, the process of analysis in hermeneutic research is for the most part undefined (Moules, Field, McCaffrey, & Laing, 2015; Paterson & Higgs, 2005). In response to this, I drew upon a number of conceptual tools to help in the identification of themes in the data.

In the first instance, I undertook process coding using a two-cycle coding model to identify key themes from the transcripts. Initial codes identified from the transcripts are shown in Appendix G. Dialogue analysis was used to analyse the coded text from transcripts following Marková, Linell and Grossen's (2007) approach. The transcripts were then re-read to consider the complexities of group dynamics present within the focus groups specifically.

The transcript was read in consideration of the way talk occurred, including communication activity types enacted and how it was that they shaped the conversations. For example, participants related to others in the group differently during different conversations. While a participant may take on the role as speaker or listener, participants also took on other discursive roles such as the ratifying listener or as an instigator at different points in the discussion (Goffman, 1981, cited in Marková et al., 2007, p. 59). Considering the way conversations unfolded drew

attention to the dynamics of the groups. For example, Roger from the Higher Income Cohort, took on his occupational role to explain his understanding of sustainability in reference to how waste was managed at his place of employment. Participants drew on their multiple identities throughout the focus group to give meaning to different topics or questions.

I considered the heterogeneity of the participants, as the voice of an individual was at times negotiated and intersected by the voices of others in the group (Longhurst, 2010; Marková et al., 2007). In a similar way, the individual voice was at times influenced by voices external to the setting (Bourdieu & Accardo, 1999; Marková et al., 2007). For example, when Patricia shared her position on refugees in Australia, she drew on discourse circulating in popular national media at the time of the interviews. Reading the transcript with this in mind, informed my interpretations and understanding of how conversations developed and unfolded in particular ways.

During analysis, I observed the way ideas were circulated and formed in focus group discussions. I observed that the group dynamic was not simply an arena where participants displayed pre-formed ideas. Rather, the focus groups were a platform open to potential confrontation and negotiation (Longhurst, 2010; Vicsek, 2007). Participants constructed new forms of reasoning, both for themselves and for others in the group. For example, Heidi's understandings were influenced during the focus group when Margaret presented her thoughts about global warming. Margaret had said:

I don't think we should know about it. Because I think companies are putting it on us, everyday citizens...like all these products have been handed to us, we

use them and now we're bad because we've been doing what people have been telling us to do over the years.

During the semi-structured interview with Heidi, I asked her what she thought about Margaret's comment. Below is a short extract from the transcript to illustrate how new ways of thinking had emerged for Heidi, based on her interactions with Margaret.

Heidi: I thought that was pretty good what she had to say actually...

Interviewer: Did you think that before?

Heidi: Never really thought about it actually, I've never really thought about, 'hey global warming!' never really crossed my mind. Then she spoke about it.

I thought, you know what, that's actually a really good point and it did make sense.

Heidi's example shows how viewpoints expressed by others in the focus group can influence other conversational contexts, such as the understandings that were later shared in semi-structured interviews.

In addition to finding moments of knowledge construction in the transcripts, I also found instances in which knowledge was taken as shared by the groups. This relates theoretically to ideas of a shared habitus and also to doxic understandings (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990b). I considered what knowledge was shared by the group and what knowledge was perhaps unsettled during conversations. I reflected on who spoke and into what conversations during interviews, which later became relevant to unpacking how questions of sustainability were negotiated across social contexts. Unpacking the shared knowledge of the group was documented both during analysis

of transcripts as well as in researcher notes and reflections, such as the trials and tribulations of mothering. In the Mother's Group, there was a shared knowledge about the daily routines required to look after a toddler.

Coding and theme identification from within transcripts were continuously discussed with the supervisory team. However, reiterating the point from Moules, Field, McCaffrey, and Laing, "data analysis in hermeneutic research differs from other research approaches because it is divergent rather than convergent: it involves carefully opening up associations that strengthen understanding of the topic rather than focusing in on a single governing theme" (2015, p. 117). Therefore, I used coding as a starting point of analysis to familiarise myself with what was going on in the transcripts and as a way to think about how sustainability presented in participants lives. I found that after coding, I would be curious about emerging insights in the data and I would write into my curiosity as a way of expanding and interpreting the data I was working with (Tracy, 2012). It was during processes of writing that interpretations and stories from the interview materials truly began to emerge.

4.4.3 Writing as Method

Scholars of hermeneutics argue that writing is an ongoing process throughout a research project and integral in forming interpretations of data. A number of disciplines similarly purport writing as a process undertaken to arrive at meaning, used to work over ideas and thinking (Olson, 1996; Reither, 1985; Colyar, 2009; Green, 2015). Colyar positions writing as a 'learning tool' in processes of research. She claims that, "writing is product and process" (2009, p. 422) and goes on to say that, "I will not come to understand my own argument until I have completed the initial draft. Only then will I know what I want to say...I cannot draw the roadmap

until I know what the road looks like” (2009, p. 422). Colyar argues that writing is a generative act in undertaking research and should be recognised as such.

Green similarly advocates that qualitative research “...is emergent, exploratory, recursive, an ‘act of discovery’, of invention” (2015, p. 6). He posits writing as an indiscriminate component of doing research. He terms this conceptualisation of writing, as “research-as-writing” (2015, p. 5). Shown in the extract from my research journal below, I used writing as a process for eliciting meaning, rather than a means of describing it. I followed leads during transcription and pondered my research questions and tried to remain critical of my interpretations. I questioned myself within the text, shown below by ‘what do I mean by this?’ suggesting I did not, or could not, at that time fully comprehend the ideas that were developing in my writing. In this way, I employed writing as method to work out what my data was saying:

16th June 2016

If I think of sustainability and how participants interpret it, I would say that it has to do primarily with connections. Values and connections are the building blocks for people and they hold these very close. The ways in which structural forces ‘act’ upon us tend to corrupt and direct our attention, either away from what is actually important or use these ‘what is important’ against us. What do I mean by this?

Moules, Field, McCaffrey, and Liang (2015) describe how hermeneutic writing must always be understood as never complete but always a storying of the ongoing, fluidity of the phenomena under examination. Hermeneutic interpretations

involve answering questions that could be answered differently with different interpretations (Moules, McCaffrey, Field and Liang, 2015). The importance of writing in hermeneutic research is the process of crafting quality interpretations that best answer the questions posed (Madison, 1988).

I drew on the work of Steeves (2000) to think about how to craft the best interpretations. Steeves (2000) claims that hermeneutic research necessarily demands that researchers think with data, with the objective of going beyond that data. In the following extract, I go beyond the data, “as a means of thinking about the broader world” (Steeves, 2000, p. 97). I question and make links from the transcripts to discourses of death and their influence on conceptualisations of the future:

12th January 2016

Confirming R's comments, B intervenes with the statement, 'Oh yeah, I am too I suppose' indicating that new knowledge is being developed for B as he is reflecting on R's comments and identifying with this personally. There has been two direct references to death at this point and one indirect reference with 'if you make to the next day its a bonus'. This could be an interesting consideration in the data...Does the future represent death for people and is the way death conceptualised in our culture detrimentally influencing how people conceive of the future?

This extract is one of my first attempts at interpretive writing after working with the transcripts. I did not end up following this line of inquiry, however the extract demonstrates how writing was used throughout the project in making interpretations in conversation with the interview material.

Writing as method was used as a way of actively inquiring into the themes I found in the data as well as capturing and recording how my interpretations were being formed. Throughout the project, I would regularly share writing with my supervision team who would critically engage with my interpretations and storying. This was an enriching process for the project, which provided an additional layer of reflexivity into how interpretations were presented and have subsequently appeared in this thesis.

4.5 Summary

Adopting a hermeneutical approach underpinned by habitus as method has necessitated some methodological initiative. Although Bourdieu's work has been applied extensively across disciplines, he left no explicit method for applying habitus as method. However, scholars such as Holt (1998) and Reay (1995, 2004) have begun the process of working with habitus in ways that illuminate its potential as method. Hermeneutics offers an approach to the research that embraces habitus as method in centralising meaning-making in acts of interpretation. In this sense, including the subjectivities of participants in their constitutions and encounters of sustainability.

In this study, I employed focus group and semi-structured interview methods to explore sustainability encounters with participants from diverse social locations in Tasmania. There were five focus groups of participants represented in the study, comprising a total of 25 individuals. I conducted semi-structured interviews with 14 of the 25 participants. Process coding was a beginning point for analysis; however, it was by using writing as method (Green, 2015) that themes from the data emerged to become the stories of the following chapters.

In the next chapter, I begin storying the experiences of participants in the project. I explore constitutions of ‘the good life’ (a part of the empirical discursive frame used in discussions of sustainability) with participants and present highly diverse, yet thematically similar interpretations.

Chapter 5

A “Good Life”: Interpretations of Sustainability

Concepts of sustainability are linked to questions and contestations of what it means to have a good life. This chapter explores what is important in the lives of participants through a lens of ‘the good life’. I argue that meanings and experiences associated with a good life are diverse and reflect participant’s social contexts. To explore this diversity, I draw upon Bourdieu’s concept of habitus to describe the internalised dispositions of thought and action that generate “meaningful practices and meaning-giving perceptions” (1984, p. 170). This chapter provides a reference point for participants’ interpretations of sustainability concepts used in later chapters that critically engage with questions of sustainability. Deflecting back to the discussion in Chapter 1 and 2, I acknowledge that what a good life looks like may, and most likely will, look different in other social locations. I also recognise that my interpretations of the data are one set of interpretations among many possible others.

In addition, I want to reiterate the importance of recognising the diversity inherent to the ‘groups’ that I work with in this thesis. While participants share some characteristics, whether through demographic indicators or social networks, each member has distinct and different lives. Therefore, as I proceed forward, I do so in recognition of the complexity of the participant’s lives and of the stories shared with me relayed in this thesis.

Analysis of qualitative interviews with participants from each of the social groups identified five themes relating to understandings of a good life and concepts of sustainability guided by Agyeman and Evans’ (2004) framework. Section 5.1 introduces the theme of family and its central importance in experiences’ of a good life. In section 5.2, I explore concepts of multiplicity and place in the context of social connectedness in contributing towards a good life. Section 5.3 details the material/immaterial complexities in experiences and constitutions of happiness expressed by participants. Section 5.4 explores how personal achievement, in the broadest sense, was identified as important for a good life. Section 5.5 explores the theme of health and the importance of being healthy that was expressed by participants as necessary for pursuing a good life.

5.1 Family

Social research literature has established that, across a wide variety of social and cultural contexts, a sense of belonging to family contributes towards people’s ideas of a good life (Allardt, 1993; Hurka, 1993; Maslow, 1958). Similarly, participants identified spending time and sharing physical space with family as central to their experience of a good life. This is not to say that participants had a common understanding of family or family belonging.

5.1.1 Interpretations of Family

The concept of *family* has received substantial scholarly attention over the past couple of decades, reflecting varied interpretations and troubling imagined traditional ideals (Collins, 1998; Seymour & Walsh, 2013; Trost, 1996). These *traditional ideals* centre on nuclear constructions of family (heterosexual couples with children), place of residence, and co-habitation (Bourdieu, 1996). As noted by Bourdieu (1996), “...one has to cease to regard the family as an immediate datum of social reality and see it rather as an instrument of construction of that reality” (p. 22). Bourdieu encourages his readers to recognise *family* as a powerful idea. Collins (1998) similarly notes, “the power of this traditional family ideal lies in its dual function as an ideological construction and as a fundamental principle of social organization” (p. 63). Participants’ descriptions of *what family looks like* were powerful in shaping how they came to think about what was important to sustain into the future.

Traditional understandings of family were present in participant ideas. For example, Heidi alludes to her conceptions when she says: “...seeing that my children...are still together as siblings...I guess you have it in your head to grow old with your partner...that old nice sort of thing.” In further conversation about the future, Heidi mentions how she and her partner are planning for this ideal, of growing old together into retirement. Participant constitutions of *family* were reminiscent of the ideals and structures of the *traditional family* (Bourdieu, 1996), including nuclear constructions, parent-child relations and also proximity. However, the interplay of these ideas was dependent on how participants structured their own lives and aspirations for the future.

Participants in the Philippine Group indicated that they belonged to an extended family group; one that ranged across generations, and diverse kin relations in addition to nuclear parent-child relations. Family is the heart of habitus for participants in the Philippine Group and traverses complex and distant geographies. Rosa, for example, feels very connected with her family in the Philippines, including her parents, aunty, and uncle.

The Philippine Group found their interpretation of family challenged by the cultural expectations of Australia. This is illustrated during a conversation with Mary when she spoke about her Australian husband's family, "they are around, but not very involved. We just see them in a birthday...it so annoying that you have your family here but it's just like no support at all." Mary's perception of how family is practiced involves supporting each other with daily activities such as child rearing. She expressed that this was in conflict with her husband's family. Similarly, Rosa speaks of the tension caused between her and her Australian-born husband when she sent money to her extended family in the Philippines. She speaks of having a 90% good life, "because I don't have all my family here so only have my sister. It would be perfect if mum and dad were here and the other brother." A sense of belonging that included the extended family was most present in the Philippine Group and encompassed a set of dispositions that engaged family in daily tasks. While a sense of belonging that included complex kin relations was discussed in other groups, cultural practices were centred on coming together for recreation or ceremonial activities, as noted by Mary. The following sections build upon these ideas and explore some of the concreteness and materiality in the way people think about the concept of family.

5.1.2 Spending time with family

Spending time with family was important to most participants to having a 'good life'. Winston from the Higher Income Cohort suggests this when he says, "I enjoy spending time with my kids and grandkids", and Rosa from the Philippine Group who notes the importance of spending time with her son. However, participants largely associated family time with romanticised understandings of *quality time*. Emphasis was placed not just on the amount of time spent with family but on the quality of this time. When I asked Paul from the Men's Group what the activities are that he wants to do if freed from his daily obligations of work, he responds with, "spending more time with [his] kids." Rosa similarly remarks, "I know it's important quality time when I am home. But it would be nice if I was just at home and spent time with him."

While spending time with family was important to participants, family was also a connection to a meaningful past. In the Mothers' Group, Jessie discusses the values she tries to instil in her children, which prompts her to think back nostalgically to her childhood and how values were embodied then. Family was found across the groups to sustain a sense of historicity and locatedness. This accords with Daly (2001) who argues that family time is often valued nostalgically for memories of the past and wanting to honour traditional understandings of family. The habitus ensures the active presence of past experiences which form the schemes of perception, thought and actions (Bourdieu, 1990b). In the case of spending time with family, certain activities are equated to quality time related to the previous social and cultural exposures of habitus.

Ideas of what constitutes family varied most prominently with cultural field. Yet, how time with family was conceived and prioritised appeared to be strongly influenced by economic capital. Daly (2001) notes that, “Family time is not only a descriptive term that offers a perspective on some aspect of family togetherness, it is a prescriptive term that directs families to act in certain ways” (p. 284). For the Higher Income Cohort, this involved negotiating work commitments at the expense of time with family in the present and spending more time with family later in life. Participants of the Higher Income Cohort spoke with a surety about their futures that would enable this. In the Philippine Group, there was less surety about forward planning and more emphasis on the negotiation between work and family in the present.

The continued negotiation in allocating time for family and work was embodied differently across the groups. The practice of spending time with family was mediated by the necessity of participating in paid work and was particularly prominent in the Philippine Group. When asked what money could provide, Rosa said, “I can’t stay home with Lex [her son] because he is important and to have all my family together in one place because I don’t have to work. If we have money, we can survive.” Rosa demonstrated throughout her interview, a constant tension between work and child care and how she is an unwilling participant in social structures. At the same time she demonstrates how economic growth acts as a governing doxa when she suggests that more money is the answer. She seems unable to imagine any other way of being in the world.

The Higher Income Cohort expressed a tension between work and family differently. The conditions of the fields in which these participants were located, enabled planned and strategised activities (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 44). Participants in the

Higher Income Cohort took for granted a wider array of choice making. For example, Winston remarks that:

[I'm] a very big advocate for strategy...if you generally have a strategy on where you might like to head, it will form like buffers in the bowling alley. It will just keep you on track. I try to apply that to what I'm doing if that makes sense. So you don't actually define the buffers, you define the end game of where you want to get to and that by default defines the buffers.

While similar work and family life tensions were discussed, the Higher Income Cohort expressed an acceptance of the present conditions and belief in strategies that would ease these tensions in the future.

5.1.3 Sharing Physical Space with Family

Physical proximity, or sharing space, was identified as important for the experience of family. While sharing physical space with family implies sharing time, it is possible to share time with family that does not always occur in the same location. For instance, while Mary skypes with her family in the Philippines every day, this was not the same as them living close by. For Mary, proximity is a condition of importance. Mary and others in the Philippine Group acknowledge and speak of longing for their families to be in Australia. However, earning money to support family members in the Philippines made the geographical separation bearable. Because of the perceived necessity to support her family, Mary operates across geographical boundaries in her everyday world. Philippine participants were located in multinational networks with complex spatial relations because of constant

negotiations between economic necessity and what was viewed as important; i.e. family. This indicates a well-established mobile habitus in and out of the Philippines.

In the Men's Group, Paul also speaks of the importance of proximity to family when he discusses living with three of his children and three of his grandchildren. Because of this, he is able to support his daughter by looking after her children while she is at work. He was also able to assist his son when he was mentally unwell. In addition, Paul recognises the benefit of having the children around for his wife's health:

I enjoy spending time with my kids and grandkids and I also enjoy my time out as well. It's a balance thing. The good part of it is it keeps my wife happy and keeps her occupied. Don't get me wrong, she is the sort of person to need that family contact to stimulate her mind.

While proximity to family is viewed as 'good' for the social and emotional benefit it provides, Paul's living arrangements are an example of a practice of family that is driven by economic necessity. Calarco (2014) notes this is common for working class individuals who tend to live in more interdependent communities. Paul speaks of the dependence each member of the family has with other members in some way.

Within the Mothers' Group, Jessie reminisces over her own childhood experience of family and uses these moments to influence the choices she makes for her family in the present. Daly (2001) suggests people often try to recreate the experiences of the past, highlighting the weight of past experiences in influencing

dispositions of habitus. Jessie suggested that it was doing everything together as a *huge family*, that were the most memorable and positive experiences in her childhood.

...I guess for us we were lucky in a way because we come from a huge family. Like my mum is one of 11 children so all our growing up we grew up with grandma, aunties, uncles, cousins we were never like bored we didn't ever have to, we did everything together as this huge like huge family.

In this quote, Jessie gives a sense that family is meaningfully enacted through proximity; *we did everything together*. In the Mothers' Group, the *practice of doing together*, as a family, was a mutually intelligible and legitimated practice (Bourdieu, 1984). Family was a taken-for-granted aspect of daily existence, incorporated into the everyday world of participants.

Participant interpretations of family were, in many ways, set in tension with the individualistic assumptions present in sustainability discourses. Referring back to discussions in Chapter 2, many neoliberal sustainability discourses present solutions to complex sustainability problems through individual consumption practices. An internet search reveals many advertising campaigns and websites pitching solar panels "to save the family money" (Google search, November 2017). Yet, as Middlemiss (2014, p. 939) notes, "individualisation is not as widespread in people's daily lives, or as universal experience..." as theorists often suggest.

In support of this critique, participants' interpretations of family push back against these constructions and represent deeply held connections to kin that are maintained, for example, through the passing down of values, nostalgia and sharing of space. Interpretations of family were complex and contextually located in the social

and cultural contexts of habitus. Where a participant is located socially mattered in how family was interpreted and subsequently practiced in the everyday world. The field informed understandings of what is meant by *family*, which generated meaningful practices that expressed the logics of the field. An example of this came from Jessie when she spoke of how she wanted to pass on the values she grew up with in her childhood. Jessie is reproducing the cultural practices that are familiar to her experiences and social locatedness. Social position was something that influenced the scope and scale of what people saw as possible for themselves, a point of sight, as well as an embodied set of dispositions.

5.2 Social Connectedness

Participants spoke of connectedness to people and places in their constructions of a good life. Participants' sense of connectedness was influenced by their relations with people including (but not specific to) family members, and to spaces and/or facilities where people were able to meet. Research has shown that people who perceive themselves to have an inadequate level of social connection are less happy and have increased health risks (Cacioppo & Patrick, 2008; Putnam, 2001).

Additionally, socio-cultural integration and personal relationships were found to contribute towards a sense of connectedness (Haller & Hadler, 2006; Putnam, 1995, 2001). During analysis, I found interconnections between participants' experiences in physical spaces and with their sense of social connectedness. For instance, Tom exemplifies how mobility in physical spaces is important to his experiences of social connectedness when he says: "Social connection, I think you've got to have a social, no good being tied up in one place. I think it's important." The act of moving between places to enable social connections is valued in and of itself. At the same time,

spending time in places promoted a sense of belonging to that place more broadly and amplified the general sense of being socially connected.

5.2.1 Multiplicity in Connections

Connections across multiple places were important elements of having a *good life* for many participants. There were a number of places discussed by participants including local parks, supermarkets, neighbourhood houses and netball teams. While the places that participants discussed were often different between the groups, the importance of experiencing and being connected in some way to a diverse range of places was similar across social groups. Literature also suggests that diverse experiences in place and community contribute positively towards wellbeing (Seeman, 1996; Sobel, 2004).

Participation in multiple places was often connected to their perceived affordances for possible social interactions. Connecting with people in a range of different social settings was seen as contributing towards a good life. For example, the members of the Men's Group discussed the benefits of connecting with other men. Similarly, the Over 65s Group suggested strongly that without the community group, they would not have any way of connecting with others. Experiences in other places contributed towards a sense of social connectedness. These particular opportunities did not necessarily result in deep social bonds between individuals, rather, afforded opportunities to participate in shared practices with others.

In a similar way, Sarah from the Higher Income Cohort speaks of how she enjoys connecting with her customers at a store where she works:

I see them every day but I don't necessarily live with them, but they give you a sense of belonging towards them... You sort of feel like a part of their lives, even though you are just selling them a newspaper at 6am in the morning.

However, Sarah's connection with her customers extends only to that particular place. This is made explicit when she says, "[if] I see them in the street in town I won't make the effort." Illustrating the importance of connecting with a diverse range of people, but exemplifying the importance of context and perceived *legitimate* social practices within certain fields (Bourdieu, 1984). Sarah's connections in one place did not extend across to others.

The medium through which connections occurred was also discussed in each of the social groups. In a discussion of moving to self-checkouts in the supermarket, Sandy suggests that face-to-face relations are important: "You lose the face-to-face with people... You lose face-to-face with people and the social interaction. You always see someone at the supermarket that you know." Sandy expresses how upset she is to lose the opportunity to connect with others because of a technological change that restructures this field.

On a similar theme, connecting to others via technological media was largely absent from my conversations with participants. I interpret this absence to correlate with age. An immersion in technology is one of the defining features of the lives of people born after 1990 (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). As a case in point, the youngest participant in the study was 19-years-old, and she refers to Facebook as an important way of connecting with people in her social network. However, Paul (in his 50s), from the Men's Group, puts forward his views on how social connections should occur when he says,

I think it will revert back [to face-to-face interactions]. It will get to a point where people will get sick of [connecting online]. I honestly do. I think it is a bit of a cycle. They will want one-on-one contact again.

Participants were most familiar with social connections occurring through a face-to-face relation. Participants in the study have dispositions that privilege social relations in physical space. The lack of desire to connect differently, the lack of networks within other fields with which to connect (social capital), and the lack of skills to use the technology (cultural capital) are disincentives to trying things in new social fields outside those already known.

5.2.2 Place-based Connections

Participants' experiences of being in the world were largely influenced by the spaces and places that they inhabited. From the transcripts, I found that for the most part, the physical world was conceptualised to exist external to the human world. However, there were socially located differences in conceptions of how humans were positioned in relation to the physical world. I interpreted a complex relationship between expressions of environmental and social connectedness. Some participants saw the environment as something external to their everyday worlds, yet connected meaningfully to their social interactions and sense of social connectedness. While this relationship is explored in greater depth in Chapter 6, in this section I explore the concept of place-based connectedness to reveal how this was important in participants' interpretation of a good life.

Detailed by Hidalgo and Hernández (2001), a number of interpretations of connection to place exist, as well as terms that speak to place-based connection. Common across scholarly works is the idea that place connectedness represents the link between spaces and people and the embodiment of this connection (Cresswell, 2014; Massey, 1994), similar to the views expressed by participants.

For example, Mary enjoys going down to the local oval with her husband and son after work. She says: “With my little family here, we normally just go the oval at the university when the weather is alright for football...my husband said that with him he wants this to engage in the sports thing.” While she talks fondly of the oval itself, she enjoys spending time there because she can watch her husband interact playfully with their son. The oval provides the necessary space for the ball sports that her husband enjoys.

Similarly, for the groups participating in the study from the Neighbourhood House; the house itself was seen as a place of value. For the Philippine Group, the Neighbourhood House provided a space that they could go and talk with others who share similar experiences. For the Over 65s Group, the Neighbourhood House provided a reason to leave home. Patricia illustrates this when she says:

When I come up here I really enjoy coming up here. I don't go anywhere much else now... I suppose it's just talking to other people. It's just people that you don't see except when you are here.

In this quote, Patricia suggests that although the place is of value to her, the opportunity for social connection the place enables is the reason for its value.

Hidalgo and Hernandez (2001) propose that often places are significant for the social connections afforded. In their empirical study on place attachment to cities, neighbourhoods, and houses they conclude that:

Social attachment is greater than physical attachment in all cases. Up to now, a great number of studies have highlighted the importance of the social dimension in the growth of attachment, to the point that place attachment has become identified with attachment to the people who live in that place. This work has also shown the importance of the social dimension (p. 279).

While Hidalgo and Hernandez (2001) note the significance of social connectedness in place, they complexify this scenario with the addition of:

However, we have observed that besides social attachment, people feel attached to the physical dimension of places. Without doubt, these two components of place attachment generally come together, and become a general affective feeling toward the place of residence, in its physical as well as its social dimension (p. 279).

In conversation with participants, it was the interconnectedness and complexity in relationships between environments and people that came to the fore. Yet, it was revealing the historically situated perspective of spaces as places among participants. Participant stories of place connectedness were reflective of the activities and necessities of their everyday world. Places were deeply connected with the social conditions of participants' habitus (Bourdieu, 1984, 1990a). Such as Sandy who

spoke about the supermarket, or Winston who spoke about visiting Hobart every week but only recently feeling “a part of the community”. The places that participants connected to were socially situated within the cultural practices of their social location (Bourdieu, 1990a).

5.3 Happiness

Happiness was a prominent theme brought into conversations by participants. As noted by Frey and Stutzer (2010, p. viii), “there is probably no other goal in life that commands such a high degree of consensus.” Happiness was not explicitly mentioned in interviews, however, participants referred to happiness in conversations about what is important for a good life and also in discussions about other people’s quality of life. Happiness is precisely the kind of ‘empty signifier’ that has life breathed into it in a particular habitus. It does not mean anything on its own, it has to be imagined and enacted. I explore how understandings and expressions of happiness were diverse among participants, but were also socially located in this section. The role of experience in everyday worlds in constitutions of happiness and also the complexity of the material are explored later in this section.

5.3.1 Interpretations of Happiness

Understandings of what constitutes happiness were found to be culturally and historically located. People’s understanding and experience of happiness were complex and were found to extend beyond simply material or emotional accounts. Many of the participants shared thoughts and feelings that reflected happiness as a state of being, influenced by place and context. Rosa talks of how she experiences happiness differently in Australia than in her native country: “...the happiness is

different compared here, because you have a lot of family over there, cousins and aunties.” Rosa suggests happiness has a fluid meaning that, when practiced, can be experienced differently according to social and cultural conditions.

Patricia from the Over 65s Group refers to her own happiness after reflecting on her life experiences. Patricia consciously decides about whether or not she is happy. She put it this way: “... and I suppose there are people worse off, but I can’t say there would be anyone any much better. I’m happy, you know, I’ve got plenty of food and kids are all happy. So no, I’m quite happy.” She uses comparison with other people as a way of making meaning from her own situation. Then, noting that there are elements in life, such as food and *happy* children that if satisfied, are indicators, in their own right, of happiness. Patricia’s comments here represents perspectives held by many of the older participants.

The period of time that Patricia and others in the Over 65s Group grew up in offers some context for understanding why happiness is conceived in particular ways. Patricia and others in this cohort were born shortly after the Great Depression in Australia. It was a time of heavy unemployment and scant resources, where thriftiness and social cohesion were valued (Australian Government, 2015). People struggled to meet basic needs and happiness was found through satisfying them. Patricia’s habitus seems to reflect the cultural practices and the social norms of her childhood. Habitus is cemented in past experiences and is most strongly constructed during childhood (Bourdieu, 1977). While Patricia’s habitus retains a capacity for responsiveness, this is shadowed by the histories, habits and boundaries of her past that are so internalised in self-awareness as to be invisible.

In contrast, an example that highlights agency comes from Heidi, a younger participant, when she reflects on her everyday world compared with others:

Even if someone is richer or healthier, that they're still equal because they still have to go through life and challenges and just because they have everything does not mean their life is not as happy as mine is.

This observation suggests that Heidi conceives of happiness independent to the social and cultural conditionings of habitus. Happiness is achieved primarily by a person's internal dialogue and is relatively unaltered by external conditionings.

Similarly, though somewhat different to Heidi, Patricia demonstrates her interpretation of happiness when she says:

I'm happy enough, you know. As long as I've got my licence I can come up here and go to the shop and do a few things, that's it. Well it's no good of wanting to do things you can't do. You would be very miserable wouldn't you? I don't think you can do that; you've got to take it as it comes. It's not much good of me wanting to fly.

In this comment, Patricia begins to explore the complexity in achieving happiness. She suggests that the agency of an individual is important to determine what should constitute happiness. At the same time, she insists that access to material items, such as a car licence, is important. She concludes by saying that the licence is valuable for what it provides in the pursuit of happiness - accessible, convenient transportation. The following section explores entanglements of material and experiential elements in understandings and feelings of happiness.

5.3.2 Experiences of the Everyday – Material Complexity

In many cases, happiness was identified by participants as something achieved in experiences. Experiences that contribute to happiness included connecting with family, spending time with other people, and participation in place-based activities. Some research purports that experiences bring greater happiness than material possessions (Bhattacharjee & Mogilner, 2014; Frey & Stutzer, 2010). However, what was evident in many of the conversations with participants was the complexity and connectedness of experiences to the material. Experiences were facilitated for many participants by an ability to meet basic needs, such as accommodation and paying bills (Maslow, 1958).

Bourdieu (1984) thought about the meeting of basic needs through his conceptualisations of necessity. Similar to Maslow's (1958) framing of first level needs, Bourdieu described distance from 'necessity' as a means of thinking about how people prioritise and give time and energy to particular activities. Evident in both Bourdieu and Maslow's theories is the assumption that the further away individuals and collectives are from 'necessity' or basic needs, the greater the capacity for social and cultural advancements (Bourdieu, 1984; Maslow, 1958). However, Bourdieu and Maslow think differently about who determines what is a 'need' (Maslow's language) or 'necessity' (Bourdieu). Bourdieu's interpretation acknowledges the positioning of the individual and their perception of what is a necessity in their life, while Maslow's theory tends to rely on an objective truth that is relevant to all people regardless of social location. Following Bourdieu's usage, many of the participants suggested that they were driven by necessities in their lives, although, the determination of what *was* necessary was dependent on the perspectives and values of the individuals. Rosa

noted that more money would make her life easier and better because, at present she, "...can't stay home with [her son]". More money would enable her "to have all [her] family together in one place...If we have money, we can survive." There was a desperation for Rosa in getting to a financial position that would enable the family to be reunified. At the same time, Rosa made the point that "not everything you can get from money." So while she acknowledged the need for money, Rosa too acknowledged that money in itself does not *buy* happiness, rather, it buys access to it.

The conditional freedoms available within a habitus become evident in participants' elaborations of *getting to* happiness. Some aspects of habitus are driven by physical requirements of the body to satisfy hunger and the need for shelter. Yet, when these conditions are met, Bourdieu (1984) suggests the habitus becomes the enactment of a conditional freedom that pursues "higher order" experience, as Maslow theorises. Bourdieu (1984) conceptualised this more esoteric, "cultured" pursuit as a marker of *distance from necessity*.

For Sarah, material possessions were not recognised as important, but money to fulfil basic needs were considered an obvious necessity. There was some conflict and unresolved understanding for Sarah in the relationship between happiness and money, for example, when she says: "I guess, you can still be happy if you are living on the street with some money, but you have certain experiences that you are not going to have." Sarah's comment suggests that she values economic capital and that within her social fields, economic capital is a measure for the good life. Yet, she recognises the value of experiences as an independent measure and enabler of happiness, never identifying that it is her economic position that gives her access to these experiences. Sarah's comments are particularly interesting because of how she is socially located. Sarah lives with her parents who she perceives as being wealthy.

Sarah's habitus situated in middle class conditions, which provides some insights into her conflicted perception of money.

Most participants spoke about the complexity to understanding and experiencing happiness. Material possessions, including money, were more readily pursued as a means of enhancing happiness in the Higher Income Cohort, such as, Winston and his interest in sailing and Sarah when she expresses her ideas of money *enabling* more experiences. Social contexts, such as the Mothers' Group and the Philippine Group, seemed to suggest that happiness was experienced through meeting basic material needs. Participants explored the interconnections between the material and the experiential in some way, and connected these ideas with attaining happiness.

5.4 Achievement

The theme of achievement was also a marker of a good life, with socially located meanings. Achievement has been identified in the literature as a driving force of modernist understandings of progress (McClelland, 1987). A sense of achievement and the act of pursuing goals is reported to render life meaning and important in realising 'a good life' (Tiberius, 2005). Similarly, Bourdieu linked aspiration (a close relative of achievement) to happiness when he responded to the question in an interview: "What should one do to be happy?" with "One must do what little one can to change things...to escape the laws, the necessities, the determinisms" (TheSokwe, 2013). Here, Bourdieu seems to imply that aspirations are inevitable and inevitably social. Sarah, from the Higher Income Cohort, in response to the question "What does having a fulfilling or good quality life mean to you?", reinforces the importance of achievement when she responds with: "Having, like, a sense of achievement." This section explores how achievement was constituted for some participants, the schooled

culture endorsing notions of achievement and how achievement can, at times, challenge modern accounts of individualism through family aspiration and success.

5.4.1 Interpretations of Achievement

Participants' perceptions of what is achievable and what counts towards achievement were constructed through socially constituted understandings of progress and progression. Evident across the social contexts was an understanding of how *life progressed* – childhood, career/family and then retirement. While there were varied interpretations on how each of these phases would be carried out (discussed in the following section), understandings of these life stages reflected powerful cultural narratives. For example, participants equated retirement as a time of rest and relaxation: Fiona says, "Hopefully, Tim is not working anymore, just resting, retired so we can enjoy life." Similarly, Roy makes the same point when he said: "If you want to retire early...you want to sit back and enjoy some of that life." These ideas reflect wider social discourses present within participants' everyday worlds.

The *Australian Dream* is an example of a cultural narrative denoting the dominant ideas of what kinds of aspirations Australians should have (FitzGerald, 2002; Haebich, 2008). Aligned with Bourdieu's conceptions of doxa, the Australian Dream is a discursive component of the social conditions that produce habitus. Morris claims that "*the Australian Dream* powerfully underlines the fundamental role that affordable, adequate and secure housing plays in creating a foundation for a decent, fulfilling life in retirement" (emphasis in original) (Johnson, 2016). In the Mothers' Group, Sandy expresses her concern about "how much [her daughters] gotta do now just to buy [her] own place." Property ownership is a marker of the Australian Dream, that receives a lot of attention because for many people, such as Sandy's daughter,

property ownership is desired but difficult to achieve (Cowan, 2017; Denniss, 2017; Irvine, 2014). In the men's focus group, there was a rich discussion about superannuation and the negotiations that need to happen at the time of retirement. Participants' assumptions about how people retired and what they did, reflected practices sold as the *Australian Dream* (Hamilton & Denniss, 2015; Morris, 2016). For instance, Mike talks of a friend deciding on whether to sell a beach shack in order to accrue additional superannuation even though "the idea was [for the shack to be] a place for him and his wife to take off to on the weekend." Participants' discussions of life paths tacitly reproduced these dominant projections of life choices and life event ordering.

However, achievement within significant life stages was interpreted among participants differently between the social groups. This was evident in examples shared in the interview concerning what achievement looked like to participants in their lives. For example, in the Higher Income Cohort, Sarah linked her sense of achievement strongly to her career aspirations. When asked, '*What does having a sense of achievement look like in her life?*', Sarah says:

like for me...that my career is going will take over, well, not take over, but that's what I am set out to do for the next 10, 20 years and knowing that I love and am passionate about that...Knowing that I'm going to go through like baby pilot through to hopefully the top and having some kind of proud moment that I have achieved it.

Winston, also from the Higher Income Cohort spoke of strategising in order to reach a particular point in his life that would afford him the time to do the things he

wanted to do. Achievement in the Higher Income Cohort was more prominently conceived as something that would occur in the future through the realisation of an imagined future. While temporality and conceptions of the future will be explored in detail in the following chapter, suffice to say at this point, that there were less material constraints and temporal urgencies from this social context which tended to influence how achievement could be conceived.

Bourdieu (1984) proposed that social distinction is positively correlated by a socially achieved distance from necessity. Necessities are defined as those activities to which survival depends – working, family, food, shelter. Activities that related to necessity were absent from constitutions of achievement in the Higher Income Cohort. For example, Winston disregards basic necessities as achievements when he talks of time: “I’ve got enough time to do the essential things I want to do, but I haven’t got enough time to do the luxurious things that I would like to do. So must haves, you’ve got to achieve those.” Winston refers to such things as sleep and earning money as *must haves*, or items of necessity. Winston demonstrates his pursuit of a life of ease and his social position as being relatively free of urgency. This pursuit tends to induce an active distance from necessity and opens up possibilities for imagining futures and for forward planning (Bourdieu, 1984).

5.4.2 Necessities are Socially Located

However, the ways in which achievement was constituted varied with participants’ social locations. In *Distinction* (1984), Bourdieu stated that it is more than economic capital that informs habitus. He offered examples of how people with similar earnings have ‘different’ consumption patterns demonstrated through choices in food, leisure and art. Examples are given to illustrate that habitus is a perceptual

scheme that structures the perceptions of everyday existence around social class practices and perceptions: “That’s not for the likes of us” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 380). Bourdieu purported that *taste* (or preference and choice making) is reliant on the social and historical conditions of habitus. For example, when a working class person becomes more successful in business and “doesn’t know how to spend the money” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 374). Since the release of *Distinction*, scholars such as Margaret Archer and other critical realists contend that Bourdieu’s work does not recognise morals or values influencing individuals’ decision and choice making. In this sense, they argue that Bourdieu denies individual diversity within social class groups (Archer, 1996). While I suggest that there were similarities in what was regarded as valid and sensible aspirations within the social groups, I also recognise the diversity and difference of each *individual* of the group and their *unique* perspectives (Elder-Vass, 2007).

Aspirations from the Higher Income Cohort such as Sarah’s (for a high-profile career) and Winston’s (for a life of luxury) seemed different to the aspirations from the individuals in other groups from the study. For instance, Paul describes his feelings of achievement from raising a family: “To bring four children in and see them grow and now see the grandchildren grow. So that was my main achievement...” Paul speaks of the material constraints and temporal urgencies in which his aspirations have been funnelled – the ups and downs in caring for a sick wife, raising children, experiencing difficulties and periods of time of lack of employment. His aspirations are grounded in these socially and historically situated conditions. Paul enjoys and finds achievement in tending to the needs that arise from these conditions; he has a taste for the necessities of *his* life (Bourdieu, 1984). He

values and enjoys his achievements because they *are* achievements of *his* everyday world and is it from his experiences that he makes sense of what achievement is.

Mary, from the Philippine Group, speaks of the aspirations she has for her children and links her sense of achievement strongly to seeing her children succeed. Bourdieu stated “the habitus is a virtue made of necessity” (1984, p. 372). Yet, what determines necessity is influenced by the social and cultural influences of its production. To do well in school is valued highly in Philippine culture because of a belief in the opportunities schooling can provide for the recipient (Bernardo, 2003). While achievements are largely regarded as an individual activity, there are expectations within Mary’s Philippine community that ascribe education *as* a necessity. These ascriptions influence her own interpretations of what is recognised as necessity and also as achievement.

5.5 Health

Participants described good health as an important pre-cursor in striving for and having ‘a good life’. Health is often noted as an element important to a good life (Allardt, 1994; Hurka, 1993; Maslow, 1958) This is exemplified by Sarah from the Higher Income Cohort when she says,

being well, they all come first before anything else. And the career is another thing separate from all of that. I can only have the career if all the other things are OK, like the health thing is under control.

This section explores the importance of health as an enabler to daily life and explores age as a strong regulator in health experiences.

5.5.1 Enabling Experiences

Health was discussed by participants as a functional and necessary consideration in daily life. The quality of an individual's health was thought to influence the possible ascertainment of a good life. Health was not discussed as an independent component of a good life, rather, good health was seen to improve experiences that did, such as the themes discussed above. In keeping with Maslow's (1958) work on hierarchy of needs, many participants spoke of basic needs (such as health) as necessary for attaining psychological and self-fulfilling needs, which directly contributed to a good life.

The presence of illness in social connections or through personal experiences only served to reinforce the importance of good health. When asked what would make life better or easier, Paul responds with:

I suppose the only thing I can say to make my life easier or better is mine and my wife's health. Because of my wife's medical condition, we went to Victoria for 23 days and what we did in those 23 days we would normally do in a week but because of her health you've gotta extend the time in holidays and think about how you do it.

The significance of knowing others with ill health was further demonstrated by Patricia when she says, "You sort of think when these ones got this and that. Cancer and leukaemia and all that. No good. I've had nothing to affect me. Even with the grandchildren. We've been awfully lucky." Discussions of maintaining good health were not prominent in conversations until ill health was experienced, raising

questions about the importance of direct experience in acknowledging or realising the significance of something.

In addition, conceptions and experiences of health seemed to be largely shaped by age. This corresponds with Bourdieu's (1990) description of habitus as inscribed in bodies by similar histories. The deterioration of the body occurs similarly over the course of the life, which varies with an array of socially, culturally, economically and biologically determined conditions (World Health Organization, 2016). I found that younger participants gave precedence to mental health while older participants tended to discuss physical health and the implications of what *bad* health would mean for their lives. The Over 65s Group may not have referenced mental health in a similar way to the other groups because these ideas were not discursively available to them in a way that has been for younger generations (Foucault, 1982).

Younger participants referred more often to mental health and the importance of a healthy mind and positive attitude, such as Sarah who notes, "I need to work on not stressing myself out. Like sometimes I can be quite overdramatic. And then the stress builds up in my mind and then the health thing..." Or Heidi when she reflects on constantly checking Facebook, "I think I have to be [self-disciplined], otherwise I would run amuck in my head." Media over recent decades has increasingly presented information on the importance of mental wellness. Understandings of what health *is* (which now includes mental wellbeing) and the responsibility that individuals have to maintain health has changed in the same period (Kline, 2006). Media and emerging health discourses on mental health, wellness, self-care, mindfulness, therapeutic culture, and medications, among others, form components of the social conditions that influence everyday perceptions; in this instance, what constitutes good health. Sarah

and Heidi reflect their understandings of health through this socially and historically situated perspective.

Participants who were older tended to discuss physical health. They suggested that health became more of a priority with age because experiences of ill health were more frequent, either directly or through friends and family. In support of this, the prevalence of physical ailment is more likely to occur in the body as it ages (House, Lantz, & Herd, 2005). Paul, from the Men's Group, participated in activities purposefully, due to experiences of ill health in his family. While participants in the Higher Income Cohort reflected on how lucky they felt not have had any major illness to date and that this was something they were mindful of when planning their retirement. Older participants also suggested that when planning for their futures, they took into consideration their projected health for that time.

5.6 Summary

In this chapter, I explored participants' interpretations of what is important to sustain through understandings of a *good* life. The themes discussed have troubled the assumptions embedded in discourses of sustainability and presented the multiple subjectivities of interpreting and living what it means to live a good life.

Participants interpreted the good life to encompass sharing time and space with family. 'Family' was a powerful idea in shaping how they came to think about necessity and what it was important to sustain into the future. Social connectedness was also identified in participant narratives of a good life. An interconnectedness between social connectedness and place was found that suggested each afforded opportunity to experience the other; both intrinsically valued. 'Happiness' too was discussed by participants in constitutions of a good life. For the most part, participants

suggested that happiness was something to be gained through *experiences*.

Achievement was another theme identified in participants' constitutions of a good life. While understandings of what was valued as achievement varied with social location, these constructions were situated within wider social discourses of achievement and aspirations. The final theme identified in participants' constitutions of the good life was health. Health was viewed as an enabler of a good life, yet tended not to be prominent in conversations until ill health was experienced. Each of these themes contributed to participants' conceptions of a good life and informed how they came to think about what it was important to sustain into the future.

In addition, the high-minded environmental, ecological and global notions prevalent in discourses of sustainability are found to be largely ethereal for those who must work to survive and are closest to necessity. The social worlds of the Men's Group, the Mothers' Group, the Philippine Group and the Over 65s Group tended to constitute the good life through a lens of necessity. The good life was focused on values tied to survival and family, such as gaining employment, good education and instilling good values in the next generation. The Higher Income Cohort were more rooted in individualised and neoliberal narratives, such as prominent careers and successful business ventures, yet, were equally driven by the necessities of *their* everyday worlds.

In the following chapter, I explore performances in the everyday world that embody characteristics of both the themes from this chapter and the sustainability concepts guiding this study. I seek to make visible the multiple subjectivities present in this study in interpretations of what sustainability can look like. I contend that there are multiple ways of *doing* sustainability that are necessarily located in social and

historical context, and advance the claim that these ways of being are rendered invisible in discourses of sustainability.

Chapter 6

Practices of Sustainability: “That’s all you can really do...”

In Chapter 2, I argued that although problems of unsustainability have universal relevance, dominant discourses of sustainability have arisen in specific social contexts and have been shaped by particular perspectives and interests. Many social groups have been effectively excluded from talk about sustainability, which has contributed to the slow and socially uneven progress towards sustainability goals. In this chapter, I seek to widen the field of sustainability discourse by exploring the ways people who are characterised as disengaged from talk of sustainability (such as people who are thought to ‘not care’ about sustainability) are nonetheless engaged in everyday concerns and practices relevant to concepts of sustainability. I use Bourdieu’s concept of habitus to offer insight into the ways in which everyday practices are shaped by habits and norms that are reproduced through agents’ performance in specific social contexts rather than through conscious or conceptual intent. This analysis helps to explain the social contexts of dominant discourses of

sustainability as well as the ways social groups who do not align themselves with ideas of sustainability¹⁰ may nonetheless engage with and express such ideas in their lives.

I give examples of practice that I interpret to be relevant to sustainability from each of the social contexts in the research study. As reviewed in Chapter 1, I claim that these practices embody the guiding concepts of sustainability, including futurity, environment, quality of life and equity. I explore each social context in turn using an extract from an interview. In the subsequent section, I consider the influences of dominant social conventions and individualisation on performing sustainability in the lives of participants, and argue that they enable and disable participants' practices in different ways.

As I detail the practice of sustainability from the social contexts, I do so acknowledging that this is one interpretation among many. My interpretations are foregrounded in the particular themes identified from participants' own interpretations of a good life in conjunction with the sustainability concepts presented in Chapter 1. My intent in this chapter is to critically explore the ways in which the practical logics of everyday life are fundamentally relevant to ideas of sustainability, whether or not these ideas are made explicit or are implicit in everyday actions. In doing this, I seek to move beyond dominant conceptions of sustainability to an analysis of what individuals *make* of the idea. Following Bourdieu, I am interested in how individuals' understandings of sustainability are located in their social circumstances but not determined by that location. In this sense, the *social location* shapes, to some extent,

¹⁰ In the Tasmanian context and relevant to the research groups, this includes the presence of a controversial forestry industry as detailed in Chapter 2.

what is possible. Yet, none of this determines anything, in fact, it opens the door to meaning-making and diverse *takes* on things.

6.1 Case studies from social contexts

6.1.1 Mothers' Group

The extract that follows is from a conversation I had with Heidi that relates to the environment as a guiding concept of sustainability. Questions of how people conceptualise what the environment is, and how they interact with it, are often central in discourses of sustainability. This excerpt offers Heidi's perspective and interactions with the environment. More generally, Heidi's actions speak to practices in understandings of environmental cleanliness, order and risk.

Interviewer: So what do you think our role is in looking after the environment? Do we have one?

Heidi: Probably have the decency, if there isn't a bin around, put your rubbish in your pocket or in your bag, you know, keep it on yourself. Maybe, I don't know, keeping care of, I don't know, if you have a tree or a fruit tree or whatever, keeping care of it. I know if I don't really keep care of every plant around my house...they would go wild. But I would definitely make sure they wouldn't all die, that sort of thing, you know. Probably those two things.

Interviewer: So looking after what you have control over.

Heidi: I think that's all you really can do. I mean you can go and pick up someone else's rubbish. I mean I'm quite happy to pick up someone else's rubbish, but it depends what it is. Because nowadays you don't know what they've touched, what someone's touched then touched that. And you're like now I'm gunna have to wash my hands. I'm not home yet so I can't wash my

hands. (Laughing) I really freak out with that sort of stuff...Oh, it makes me mad if there's like, if we're just like walking up and there's a big like Hungry Jack's bag blowing in front of me. Imagine if that blew up onto someone else's windscreen! Like so I just pick it up and Roger it in the rubbish bin. My sons probably look at me like, 'You're a weirdo, Mum'.

Heidi offers the act of picking up rubbish off the street; someone else's rubbish as a good thing to do. The action comes from a place of care and concern for people but also from understandings of what is meant to be in particular environments. For Heidi, rubbish on the footpaths and roads in her neighbourhood are out of place. Heidi also gives some insight into her logics of practice when she speaks of the stewardship she has over the plants in and around her home. Her practices align with doing what she feels she has agency to do, as well as with her perceptions of what she is 'meant' to do in particular social fields.

She responds to a question about an individual's control with, "I think that's all you really can do." There are multiple interpretations of what might underlie Heidi's thoughts and feelings. Interpretations such as feelings of disempowerment of the power she holds in her social position, or a recognition of the limits of her influence. Another reading may be that this is a reflection of a self-directed way to limit a sense of responsibility that expresses an external process of disempowerment (Lorenzoni, Nicholson-Cole, & Whitmarsh, 2007). Read against the backdrop of environmental discourses that valorise processes of ecological decay and death (for example, compost, old-growth, and soil microbiota), Heidi's comments that she "can't wash [her] hands" may reflect distrust of such processes which results in her concern with cleanliness. This excerpt raises questions about how boundaries are

drawn between cleanliness and dirtiness in interactions with the environment and how this shapes the way Heidi, in this example, thinks about and engages with waste.

What underlies this ‘freaking out’?

The example also showcases negotiations of self in relation to sustainability that occur in social fields, most notably, fields in view of others. Heidi clears rubbish on the street because she cares for the people who could be impacted by it, as demonstrated by her statement, “imagine if that blew up onto someone’s windscreen!” She perceives that she is strongly connected within her community, and has good relations with her neighbours and within her church and family. Her desire to ensure their ‘safety’ from litter aligns with her values of community and connection. This example shows that actions contributing to environmental sustainability do not have to be driven by a concern for the environment (Newman & Fernandes, 2016). It also shows that social norms and culturally legitimated practices such as cleanliness can be interpreted differently when in conflict with what is viewed as important to an individual within the bounds of broader social and cultural understandings.

I offer a second example from the interview with Heidi. In this example, Heidi discusses how she values her connection and interaction with her neighbours. She notes the mutual benefit that this relationship affords to herself, her son, as well as her neighbours. I locate Heidi’s actions within broader practices of sharing and social cohesion.

Interviewer: What is important to you?

Heidi: I’d say family...Probably helping others, I guess. We can be a bit selfish these days, try to step away from that and kind of go back to helping,

like you know, elderly people, like my neighbours, I make cupcakes and the boys deliver them or stuff like that.

Interviewer: That's a good idea. Do you actually do that?

Heidi: Yeah, I actually do that.

Interviewer: That's lovely! So do you just deliver them to your neighbours?

Heidi: Yep and the one over that side as well. Coz she's really good, like when I have my children she like knits them a quilt or something. When he goes fishing he gives us a fish. So it's kind of like, you know, you give and take sort of thing. We have heaps of something I will share it. Kind of that sort of thing.

Interviewer: How did that come about?

Heidi: I don't know I guess just talkative. Yeah, I don't know, I've always, as soon as we moved in I've just chat, chat, and chat. And the boys as well. 'Cause they're a bit older. They kind of like having little kids. 'Cause it makes them happy. I think that sort of thing.

This example engages with the guiding concept of sustainability: quality of life. It demonstrates a model of neighbourly relations that nourish and enhance the quality of life of self and others. Heidi is networking and building relationships with her neighbours through 'chatting', sharing resources and gift-giving. This example shows the way that Heidi's value of social connection is embodied in practice and reflects how she interpreted a good life. She values *helping* people and perceives a societal shift that encourages individuals to only help themselves. Heidi suggests that her actions are reflective of her desire to challenge this. Heidi's perceptions here align with much of the green discourses about individualism, claiming societies encourage individuals to focus on self (Macnaghten & Urry, 1998).

Heidi's commentary, which was similarly expressed by participants of the Mothers' Group, is representative of the social cohesion (of community) that is often expressed as a normative principle of (social) sustainability. Other examples from the group included: "taking in kids who aren't your own", expressed by Jessie's sister; viewing supermarkets as sites of social connection (Sandy); and wanting safe, open communities for children "like back in my day" (Margaret). Themes of local connection are embedded in more recent neoliberal sustainability discourses that encourage *local* connections and *local* solutions to problems of unsustainability (Hendriks, Dormans, Lagendijk, & Thelwall, 2017; Wittman & Blesh, 2017). However, these discourses often assume that such connections do not exist and concentrate on building connections anew rather than fostering those already present (Castro, 2004). This negates the stories presented here; for instance, that from some social positions, community connection is already a way of life.

Heidi speaks of the multiple benefits that connections with her neighbours afford. While these practices result in "happiness", as identified by Heidi, they also reflect Calarco's (2014) findings that working class individuals tend to live in more interdependent communities. According to Bourdieu (1984), "it is a virtue made of necessity which continuously transforms necessity into virtue by inducing 'choices' which correspond to the condition of which it is the product" (p. 175). What this suggests is that the connections with community common for participants in the Mothers' Group are as much *desired* as they are *required*.

This example of practice is similar to calls for sharing and connection in critical discourses of sustainability. For example, in countercultural environmentalism, sharing resources within communities and local networks is positioned as beneficial for the environment, chiefly due to the reduced wastage of

resources (Hendriks, Dormans, Lagendijk, & Thelwall, 2017; Wittman & Blesh, 2017). Heidi's is motivated to share resources and cultural practices and connections to community and family which highlights the complexity in how individuals are motivated to perform in different ways (Archer, 1996; Elder-Vass, 2007). Yet, sustainability discourses that emphasise environmental practices tend to background this complexity in motivation.

6.1.2 Over 65s Group

In his interview, Tom identifies that “staying as healthy as [he] can” is important in his life. He speaks of his commitment to looking after his health, a key theme identified across the Over 65s group. He goes on to identify that exercise is paramount in his understanding and practice of health. Tom speaks of his experience with emphysema and how he tries to maintain his lung health through exercise. The extract that follows is a part of the conversation I had with Tom about his journey to find/create an opportunity that served his needs and the community more broadly. This action relates to practices of altruism and agency.

Tom: Every time I walked in [to the hospital], [the doctors] went into one of the gyms. I'd say bloody disgrace...Here you are with this gym doing nothing and here we are with lung troubles and we could do with it...And I know how good it is, so I got sick of not being able to go so I got onto the [local politician] and pestered her and we got the funding back, then we lost it again. So that's why I got onto [a local academic with gym facilities available]. Next week, I was in to them again and this went on and on and on. Anyway, she said to me, just hold on and I'll see what I can do. So the next week I said, “So what have you done?” and she said, “Look I'll go and get one of the head

exercise ones to come down and you can have a talk to him... Leave it with me.” And I said, “For how long?” He said, “No, no, just leave it and I’ll see what I can do.” Then I got a phone call and he said he had started it up...They’ve started up that ‘lungs in action’ [a program to aid community members with emphysema and other lung conditions]...Three of us went when it first started and we went through until after Christmas and then we really added to our group.

Tom’s lived experience of poor health influences how he perceives and prioritises actions. This concern and centrality of *health* was echoed in the discussions with others in this social context. This *seeing and living* of health reflects the ideas of Noddings (2013) who conceptualises a concentric circle of caring that begins with the self, through to intimate others, to distant others. However, by using his lived experience, Tom pushed back against normative ideas of caring only for the self when he creates opportunities for distant others to benefit from his pursuits. Tom rebels against individualistic social norms and seeks to create opportunities that benefit not only himself but also distant others, a practice that contributes to social cohesion.

Tom’s example engages with enactments of sustainability theory in respect to equity. While he wants to access the gym for his own benefit, it is the wider inequity of the situation that motivates Tom’s actions. Yet, Tom engages with a concern for social equity, not from a grand universal principle that is common in sustainability discourses, but through a lived experience of a problem he encountered. Tom uses his experience of ill health to reach into circles of distant others in a way that achieves mutual benefit. Noddings (2013) suggests different rules govern inner and outer circles of caring. In outer circles, people can come to rely on external rules that denote

socially accepted ways of *caring* for people they do not know, such as politeness and detachment. In this example, Tom does not rely on these external rules that can act to ‘protect and insulate’ people from the *call to care*. Rather, Tom activates what Noddings terms the “I must [care]” in considering the health needs of others (p. 46-47). Tom speaks proudly about his persistence in contacting key stakeholders to get the gym open and available to the broader community.

Participants in the Over 65s Group pursued equitable access to health care underpinned by a normative principle of social justice. They actioned this by voicing opinions directly to those involved in making decisions. While there was acknowledgement and acceptance of social hierarchies, such as the political system and the *power* of politicians; there was also encouragement for people to challenge *power* by ‘standing up for your rights’, as noted by Tom. This was similarly expressed by other participants of the Over 65s Group, such as Sherryl who enthused, “get up there with ’em!”, when she spoke about achieving community change through politics and *being* a politician. Norris (2004) contends that how people engage in political activism varies with age, which I explore in more depth later in section 6.2.

6.1.3 Philippine Group

In the extract below, Mary describes what she did when members of her Philippine community were moving into the house next door. The neighbours were unable to move into the house on time and needed a place to store their household possessions. Mary offered her garage to store the items. Mary speaks of a taken-for-granted knowing that everyone in the (Philippine) community will help each other in times of need. Mary also describes her Australian-born husband’s response to this situation. At first he was unwilling to assist due to his own understanding of

neighbourly relations, but then changed his perspective after being a part of the activity. Similar to the excerpt from the Mothers' Group, this example relates to practices of sharing and social cohesion.

Interviewer: So what does community mean to you?

Mary: Should be helping one another. Like, we have this little community, in the Philippine community that we have. We just keep looking after each other. Like, [our neighbours] have problem with the builder. I can really see that, even I talk to my husband, this is the Philippine community, this is what we are, like that. Because they have problems with the builder, they supposed to be ready Friday. They try to move in on Friday, they get the keys and the Saturday is the plan that they will move in. But, they have problem, so they decide that and at last minute last Friday, they ask my husband if it is alright to store all their stuff in our shed. Yes, and then, and my husband just keep thinking. I told him don't *think*, we will just *do* it for them...And all their stuff in our shed and all that and all that. So last Monday, the keys get given to them and then they said that moving some of their stuff to their house. It's alright, but I'm thinking, what time do you think they will finish like moving? But all of a sudden, I see heaps of Philipines helping them. The spirit of the community helping them. Wow...heaps of them, my husband said, "Oh no! Just so quick! Instead so from 7:30 am, just coming back coming back, wow! This is different from our culture, can't do this." But that's all that they have, supporting one another. 8:30 am finish. All done. Oh my god! And my husband said, "Wow, we don't have like community like this here, like helping one another, it's really, really, nice."

Mary values connection to family and community and speaks often of her ties to Philippine people in her local community and abroad. Similar stories were shared by other Philippine Group participants, which suggests that there is a known way of being together grounded in shared cultural values and shared experience. Mary draws attention to the differences between her husband's beliefs and her own. Mary suggests that differences in social norms and ways of being together are located in culture; Philippine culture and Australian culture (Soriano, 1995). With the large Filipino community in Australia, the Australian Government has information on their website (<https://aifs.gov.au/publications/families-and-cultural-diversity-australia/5-filipino-families-australia>) about 'Filipino values', reiterating the importance of 'kapwa', translated in English as fellowship. Soriano (1995) says that this means "'shared identity' because it is the unifying thread that binds the self to others" (para. 16).

Mary's example relates to a sustainability concept - quality of life. It characterises a model of community that is supportive and reliable, and illustrates the cultural practice of trusting in and relying on others in the community, which was common to the habitus of members of the Philippine Group. Ideas of reliability connect with notions of a good life and futurity, in making the world predictable for self and others. While predictability/reliability is a part of Bourdieu's 'necessity', I suggest that Mary's and others in the Philippine Group embodied these practices in more complex ways than Bourdieu's rather simple characterisation.

The surprise in Mary's husband's reaction to the togetherness of the Philippine community suggests a difference in understandings of community. Highlighted in this example are differences between Western and non-Western cultural habitus. It also highlights the extent of Western influence in sustainability discourses that valorise practices of community, which for many people, are already a way of being (Adams,

2006; Redclift, 2002). While connections in community are advocated for as solutions to problems of unsustainability in discourses, Mary's example and the discussions in the Philippine Group of the embodied *doing* of community, suggest that in this social context, understandings and enactments of community are already well established. This is an important issue in the context of thinking about the Western and non-Western cultural habitus in understandings and practice of sustainability (Adams, 2006; Redclift, 2002).

6.1.4 Men's Group

Bob's stories reflected an appreciation of his ability to enjoy activities that he had engaged in most of his life. Bob enjoys projects around the house as well as relaxation activities like watching TV. These actions relate to broader practices of habit and comfort.

Bob: ...No I'm really satisfied with my life. Like I said before, I can save. So I can do little jobs around the house. The guttering needs replacing around the house. So that's what I'm saving for now and that will be the last major expenditure; it will just be then little things like painting the fence.

Interviewer: What do you do to relax?

Bob: Watch TV mainly, or get on the internet. Or going to have a camp [nap].

Interviewer: Has this changed over your life?

Bob: No, it's always been the same. Exactly the same. It's less in gardening. I used to do more gardening than what I do now. But that might increase, say, next year, because I have to plant out the front where all that bark is. That's a relaxing thing for me.

While Bob suggests his activity is constrained by the economic resources available to him, at the same time, these activities provide a sense of comfort and are a familiar, known practice. The actions described by Bob were similar to others in the Men's Group who reflected appreciation in 'doing what they had always done'. Participants in the focus group also discussed their current goals in life. Paul talked about how he would like to see more of the state and the mainland, punctuating his comments with, "But other than that, I'm happy where I am", and, "[but] I'm really satisfied with my life" when reflecting on his goals. In relation to questions of sustainability, Bob's working class habitus makes a virtue of necessity and he finds satisfaction in the fulfilment of perceived daily needs.

Practices demonstrated participants' understandings of the good life through how they conceived of happiness and the ways that this can be obtained. These practices are implicated in sustainability discourses, through the material consumption they involve. The virtue of necessity in this context encourages thrift, saving and satisfaction through everyday activities. These practices push back against the consumerist lifestyle as strategies for minimising natural resource consumption, by valuing *doing*, rather than *consuming*. While perhaps an over-simplification that does not account for the values or agency of the individual (Archer, 1996), Bourdieu argues that these virtues are associated with the working class habitus when he says:

...working-class practices may seem to be deduced directly from their economic conditions...they stem from a choice of the necessary, both in the sense of what is technically necessary, and of what is imposed by an economic and social necessity condemning 'simple' 'modest' people to 'simple', 'modest' tastes (1984, p. 378-379).

What can be taken from Bourdieu's summation here is recognition that activities when performed out of necessity can become activities of enjoyment as well. In addition, notions of equality, understanding and acceptance were important aspects of how some men in this group conceptualised *what is a good life*. The extract below signifies the way Paul demonstrates sustainability concepts of equity through his understanding of humanity. As the Men's Group discussed accepting new immigrant Australians, Paul made a comment related to how people who have a negative attitude toward immigrants may change their minds to become more accepting. He suggests that people in the community would be more likely to accept refugees if they heard their personal stories. Paul reflects on his own experience of hearing a man's journey to Australia, and noted the appreciation and empathy he gained from hearing about the man's hardships. The other men present at the group gestured with affirming nods at what Paul was saying.

Paul: I think the biggest problem is that they don't know where these people are coming from. We know a bloke who spent 20 years in a refugee camp in Bhutan. He now has all his family here. But all his kids were born in a refugee camp. If the average Joe Blow actually sat down and listened to these people's life story they would change their mind.

Bob: I don't think it's that.

Paul: I'm just saying, if the average Joe Blow family heard some of the stories from the new Australians, which is the term they like to use. If they heard some of it, they would change their opinion. We are all human at the end of the day; we are all one race. I met him through the men's group. I have known

people who have had to sneak out of Kenya, got to England, but then found out they had sneak back into Kenya to get paperwork where there was guerrilla warfare to get to Australia. No way would I like to do that.

Paul advocates a universalism of humanity evident in sustainability discourses in his declaration, “We are all human at the end of the day; we are all one race” (Byrne & Glover, 2002; Mack, 2011). Paul’s reflection of sameness in the face of difference is reflective of practices of inclusive social relationships. He suggests that ‘storying of humanity’ is a way of building understanding of the cultural Other (Cobley, 2013; Gottschall, 2012). Paul’s idea of a good life connects with the stories of personal hardship, of people like the man he has come to know through the men’s group.

Arguably, modernity through prioritisation of positivistically organised science and formal logic has dismissed or, at the very least, downplayed the importance of storytelling. Yet, evidenced across the literature, story and narrative is a significant mode of communication and connection across cultures (Cobley, 2013; Gottschall, 2012). Paul demonstrates a practice that builds acceptance and appreciation for a diverse community in one that is traditionally mono-cultural through story (Marks, 2013).

6.1.5 Higher Income Cohort

Practices of sustainability evident within this social context related to how participants conceptualised their position in social space. Participants’ habitus included embodied characteristics of leadership and change-making in the community. Participants employed authoritative discursive formulations, for example,

when Winston discusses practices of the dairy industry and suggests that most people are resistant to change. He promotes change as good for the industry when he says, “Let’s make a step change in the industry.” Winston suggests leading the community was possible and necessary, “I’m a very, very, passionate Tasmanian in the areas that I’m involved in. If I’m passionate about something and I think it is wrong, I will try and change that. I will try and change the herd mentality.” Winston suggests that he is ‘led’ in his actions by the values of ‘his’ habitus. In consequence, conversations within the focus group were less reflective of practices of self and more centred on critical engagement with moulding others to reflect desired values and perspectives. In this sense, practices had a greater focus on the strategic direction and practices of the community. This is exemplified below in the following extract:

I think there is huge opportunities to steer and mould a community. I’ll say it very abruptly or coarsely, but this not my meaning at all. But generally, as people, we are all sheep, we just have to be led in the right direction. The real question is, a lot of times we are happy to be the sheep and every now and then you want to step out of that and you want to be the shepherd or you want to try and guide where the group is going to. And you can do that through strategy...And you’ve got to be able to do that subtly, so areas that I’m involved with that are fraught to me and I want to change it. I’m a really passionate sailor and yachtsmen and I sit on the Tasmanian board and I can have an influence there. But even that at the peak body level. But at the club level, if I think the club is doing something, do you really think that’s right and I’ll find the key people and challenge them...So that’s what I mean by ‘Why would you rest on your laurels and accept it?’ You might as well give up now if you do that.

In this quote, Winston describes his involvement and perceived roles within the community. He talks of his views about leadership in the community and goes on to describe his logic of practice, that, if he believes something he cares about needs changing, then he ensures he is positioned strategically to enable that change. He gives the example of his role in the dairy industry, "...farmers just doing what they do and prepared to take the prices...Why should we be price takers all our lives? So let's do something." The way Winston talks resonates with Reay's (1995) studies in privileged schools. She takes up Cicourel's (1993) depiction of domination as everyday practice from a classroom context. Reay (1995) purports that people 'insert' themselves into situations in differently dependent on social class position. Winston's middle class habitus inserts into community issues with assumed authority.

Winston's confidence suggested he felt *legitimated* to contribute towards the structuring of community. In this cohort, planning into the future extended beyond planning for the self. Winston thinks strategically and he calculates immediate decisions as well as for the future. Dispositions of middle class habitus include forecasting into the future and certain, strategic forms of planning. While it may be that distance from necessity meant that material constraints and temporal urgencies did not demand Winston's attention (Bourdieu, 1984), at the same time, this assumed social power is characteristic of the middle class habitus. As Stephens, Fryberg, Markus, Johnson, and Covarrubias (2012, p. 1180) note, to "influence the context, be separate and distinct from other people, and act freely based on personal motives, goals and preferences" is the objective reality of a middle class habitus.

The way participants in the Higher Income Cohort located themselves in space was also insightful in responding to questions of sustainability. For example,

discussions included how Tasmania functions in the global economy and the influences of changing global competitors. The aspirations and considerations of participants extended beyond local and national boundaries, including international travel during retirement, and deliberate actions to change the direction of communities. Research maintains that middle class people have developed dispositions for planning the future (Atance & O'Neill, 2001), passed on through embodied or institutionalised cultural capital (Calarco, 2014; Bourdieu, 1984). Discourses of sustainability have profoundly middle class origins, which is reflected in how questions of sustainability tend to use *the future* as a prominent frame (Meadows et al., 1972; World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). This raises the question, how inclusive are discourses of sustainability beyond the middle class, if, as I suggest here, having a futures-orientation is a *condition* of a middle class habitus?

The extract below shows an exchange between myself, Henry and Winston. In this conversation, Henry identifies as an authoritative voice for the state which is endorsed by Winston who goes on to consider what it would take for Tasmania to be a 'sustainable' state. I suggest Winston's closing remark asserts a neoliberal discourse of progress when he emphasises economic growth. This is highlighted when he says, "(T)o be sustainable we need to grow in some shape or form [but] it's not always about financial growth." While Winston signals the need to consider more than economic (financial) growth, so for example, other dimensions of sustainability in the extract below, his discursive formulation of "It's not always about financial growth", inscribes the dominance of the neoliberal discourse of progress ["not always" does the work here]. I suggest that although participants of the Higher Income Cohort use the

language of broadened understandings about sustainability, ultimately the economic view is dominant.

Henry: So moving into the next 10 years we have to work out as a state how to get people to come here.

Winston: I guess the question is, do we need to work out ways to get people to come here? Or, are we sustainable with what we've got already? Do we need to have more people here, you know? If you look historically, they reckon we had an influx of people 10 years ago when timber forestry and the economy was really booming and there were lots of retirees and they've sold houses in Sydney and Melbourne and down they come. We might see that again. But last time it happened, I think people got here and realised there wasn't the industries, businesses to support it. So maybe we need we need to see Tasmania change to support those people or what they'll participate in.

Interviewer: So are you suggesting that we need more industry and different industries than what we have currently?

Winston: From my personal perspective, absolutely! If we stagnate we'll go backwards. It's not always about financial growth, but I think it's about community development. It doesn't necessarily have to have a financial bottom line, but to be sustainable, we need to grow in some shape or form, I think.

Discussions within this cohort were embedded in neoliberal discourses that used economic rationale and logics to think about community development and sustainability in terms of population growth. Yet, highlighted in this extract were

tensions during discussions among the participants of the group. Both Winston and Henry questioned economic rationalism, they claimed that “it is not all about financial growth”, yet both seemed limited by the current economic model in thinking about how things could be otherwise. What does community development look like *without* financial growth? In the following section, I unpack how a neoliberal doxa (the macroscale understandings that shape what people understand to be ‘knowledge’ and ‘truth’ [Schulze, Gryl, & Kanwischer, 2014]) acted to enable and disable participants in practices of sustainability. Specifically, I explore tensions alluded to in the extracts above and explore how an economic growth imperative influenced approaches to practices of sustainability.

6.2 Practicing within a neoliberal doxa

In any social location, everyday practices include social conventions that are structured by larger doxic narratives. Within advanced-capitalist societies, neoliberalism is one of many doxic narratives (Leis & Viola, 1995). Doxas are made real in their consequences – that is, through accepted and expected ways of practicing in particular social and cultural contexts. Social conventions become a part of an individual’s embodied cultural capital, unconsciously performed and only recognisable when a disruption occurs. An example of this may be when someone from within an organisation does not apply for a position when someone they know is also applying, thus challenging assumed practices of competition in the workplace. This section details how doxic understandings were present in the thoughts and practices participants shared with me. I go on to explore how these understandings shape engagement with discourses of sustainability.

Heidi's act of picking up rubbish is embedded with culturally legitimated practices that go beyond the *act* itself. Heidi refers to the need to "wash [her] hands" after handling rubbish. The practice of hand washing is a culturally legitimated practice of the community, advocated in many campaigns as necessary to keep 'germ-free' and healthy (Shove, 2004). At the same time, the act of cleaning up rubbish is advocated for in the community and promoted as a citizenship responsibility and celebrated in the form of national events, such as *Clean Up Australia Day* (Shandas & Messer, 2008). When confronted with communal litter, Heidi must negotiate conflicting socially legitimated positions on what to do in that moment. To add further complexity, Heidi says that in the moments that she does pick up the rubbish, "My [three-year-old] son probably looks at me like, 'You're a weirdo, Mum.'" Heidi perceives her act to be socially *illegitimate*, and mimicks her son's likely reaction, which is presumably that to pick up someone else's rubbish is dirty and wrong. Individualism, a key tenant of neoliberalism, as perhaps embodied in Heidi's perceptions of her son, would reinforce a position of 'that's not my rubbish, that's not my problem and so I'm not picking that up'. Yet this perspective is in conflict with what Heidi actually values – community responsibility, which can act against neoliberal values of individualism¹¹.

The accepted social practices that seem to exist in Heidi's social location conflict with ideas of community responsibility, such as the act of picking up litter, which, in sustainability discourses promote local and community based solutions to problems of unsustainability (Shove, Pantzar, & Watson, 2012). Heidi demonstrates

¹¹ The idea of 'community' as a practice that promotes transitions towards sustainability is not without critique. Nikolas Rose (1999) in *Governing the Soul*, for example, makes a strong argument that the mobilisation of 'community' is in fact one of the many strategies used in furthering neoliberal agendas. Rose (1999) asserts that community becomes a kind of metaphor for taking the state apart.

that the decision of whether to act on a sense of community responsibility that is often advocated in sustainability discourses, is complex and implicates multiple conflicting narratives related to social position and more broadly to social worlds.

In the context of community responsibility, Mary similarly challenges social conventions which are underpinned by neoliberal doxa when she offered up her garage to a new neighbour. While in this example Mary was not conflicted herself, she relays the concerns of her husband. Mary suggests that her husband's reaction implied that this action went against social conventions to which he was accustomed. Yet, after assisting the neighbours, Mary's husband's response demonstrates the potential of experience to challenge previously held beliefs and understandings (Foucault, 1982). It also demonstrates the capacity of the habitus to change and adapt according to new experiences (Bourdieu, 1984, 1990a). Discourses of sustainability act to promote 'change' in different ways, with many discourses, such as simple living discourses, underpinned by the assumption that habitus can be rewritten/reoriented, as suggested in Mary's example.

Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) contend that individualisation exists in instruments of neoliberalism which make social processes invisible and places risks and responsibilities onto individuals (White & Wyn, 2013). Practices of individualisation act to responsibilise the individual by encouraging a view of self as project and by taking greater responsibility for social risks (such as degraded environments) (White & Wyn, 2013). Middlemiss (2014) argues that individualisation has been largely overlooked by sustainable development scholars but suggests that increasing evidence shows "sustainable development policy and practice is individualising" (p. 229), as was discussed in Chapter 2.

Participants reflected individualised understandings of some of their social and ecological relationships. For example, Heidi views her responsibilities as a steward of the environment through individualised ideas of what ecological relationships look like. For instance, tending to her fruit trees so they do not run wild or die is an example of how she locates her relationships and her responsibilities in the home. Social practices of home ownership, fencing properties, having a backyard, among others informed how Heidi thought and practiced environmental stewardship. Her practices were influenced by socially and culturally constituted ways of living together in neighbourhoods and communities, and more broadly, by the perceived social conventions of what caring for plants (or environments) of the home *looked like*, for example, how she sought to manicure plants in the home so they did not go *wild*.

Heidi also spoke of practices that resisted individualisation and noted that this resistance was important to her. Heidi talked of having meaningful relationships with her neighbours. These relationships were grounded in practices of food sharing and keeping each other company. She described this as, “try[ing] to step away from [being selfish] and kind of go back to helping.” This suggests that individualisation is not consistent or predictable in how it appears or applies in people’s lives. In fact, these two examples showcase the complexity and contextuality of thinking about how individualisation plays out in people’s lives and the implications of ‘it’ in questions of sustainability. In the latter example, Heidi works within the confines of the social conventions that increasingly encourages distance from neighbours. For instance, Putnam (1995) notes that the “proportion of Americans who socialize with their neighbours more than once a year has slowly but steadily declined over the last two decades, from 72 percent in 1974 to 61 percent in 1993” (p. 8). Simple living

discourses seek to foster relationships within local communities and are aimed at building stronger social networks; Heidi is a model of this practice.

Yet, being a ‘responsibilised individual’ was not always understood or accepted by participants. Margaret makes a comment during the focus group about global warming and suggests that it is not fair for individuals to be made responsible for practices that she perceives to be of minimal impact compared to back-of-house corporate practices. She argues that far greater waste is produced from the plastics used to bring the food parcels into supermarkets than customer shopping bags, and that it was the supermarkets that had stopped supplying boxes for customers shopping initially. She says, “I don’t think we should be here talking about global warming when all that’s going on [plastic use back-of-house in shops] at that level. How dare they blame me.” She goes on to say that customers are made to take responsibility for their shopping by bringing ‘green bags’ with them. Margaret’s response in relation to discourses of sustainability spurs questions about the consequences of responsibilisation in engaging and/or disengaging people, particularly given that many discourses, such as sustainable development, rely on practices of green consumption.

Individualisation in policies outside of sustainability discourses influenced how participants took up practices of sustainability (Middlemiss, 2014). This, in turn, impacted on how participants conceived of individual actions, took responsibility and participated in practices of sustainability. I contend that members of the Higher Income Cohort acted through political and strategic thinking at the community and institutional level, while participants from the Neighbourhood House acted through practices more locally placed. Yet, the relationship between individualisation and questions of sustainability remain unclear. I reiterate Middlemiss’ (2014, p. 942)

questions: How does individualisation impact on people's propensity to participate [in sustainability discourses]? What kinds of subjectivities are imagined by, and written into, sustainable development policy and practice? How do these imagined subjectivities in turn affect reality?

6.3 Summary

This chapter highlighted the ways that sustainability practices were present in participants' lives. Findings revealed that practices related to building and fostering communities were common for participants with a working class habitus. In particular, the Men's Group demonstrated the significance of practices that fostered acceptance, understanding, and equality. The Over 65s showcased resourcefulness and showed how a negative experience, such as ill health, could be used to propel empathic actions that benefit the self and others. Empathy is prolific in sustainability discourses and it is used as a motivator for 'calls to action' and in developing a sense of concern for the environment (Bonnett, 2002; Font, Garay, & Jones, 2016).

The practice example from the Philippine Group demonstrated the potential of social capital to address the needs of a community and an individual. Bourdieu's work tends to understate the ability of social capital to substitute for economic or cultural capital, yet, participants suggested that it was through utilising their social capital that they were able to meet daily needs. The Mothers' Group valued social connections and indicated that when this is a prominent disposition, culturally legitimated actions can be more readily challenged.

I suggest that practices of sustainability are enabled and constrained largely by socially located, social and cultural conventions of everyday life. At times, participants pushed back on these accepted and expected ways of being when

practices aligned with what they valued, such as social connection. I take up these ideas in the following chapter to explore how participants' approaches to questions of sustainability were constituted in and through concepts of space.

Chapter 7

Spatial Relations in Questions of Sustainability: “It depends on how you look at it”

In this chapter, I respond to research question 2: *How does social location influence approaches to questions of sustainability?* I engage with Soja’s (1996) work in deconstructing and making sense of the varied and multiple ways in which space is encountered and constituted, to deepen engagement with habitus. Soja’s (1996) typology of space recognises a ‘trialectic’ between representations of space, spatial practices and spaces of representation. This threefold structure offers interpretations for the lived experience of spatiality and for the factors that mediate this experience. Soja’s typology helps to shift a discussion to more nuanced interpretations of spatial

relations and away from spatial tropes and dualistic frames that are particularly common in sustainability discourses such as ecological/social, global/local.

All questions of sustainability are spatially constituted; that is, they are mediated by locations in space. Habitus offers a way to understand these mediations, which moves this inquiry toward understandings of sustainability that encompass lived experience. That is to say, people think about problems and challenges of sustainability according to what is experienced as *real* for them and are influenced by their location in a web of social, political, economic and ecological relationships.

In section 7.1, I discuss the complexity of participants' understandings of space, including the importance of fields of practice and identity (representations of space). In section 7.2, I explore the influence of media representations in formulations of sustainability concepts. I argue that while representations may be similar across the social groups, the representations that participants engaged with, and the interpretations that they made of these representations, both reflected and constituted habitus.

Section 7.3, explores lived experiences as a theme that validated and confirmed problems of unsustainability for participants. Through Soja's description of spatial practices, I interpret technologically enabled social networking as a socially situated practice that some participants used to 'have voice'.

I explore positionality and social constructions of spatiality through spaces of representation and Bourdieu's account of doxa in section 7.4. To quote Soja (1995, p. 68), "Here [in spaces of representation] we can find not just the spatial representations of power but the imposing and operational power of spatial representations." The social structures and logics of practices that guide daily living, such as domestic duties and home maintenance, limited participants' perceived agency to make

meaningful change on the issues they discussed. While this was a common finding in each of the social contexts, the types of challenges and social structures discussed were different across the groups. In this section, I also think about how these themes stand up to the solutions to problems of unsustainability in neoliberal sustainability discourses.

7.1 Sustainability Dilemmas

Participants were asked to share their thoughts on what they believed were current economic/social/environmental issues facing Tasmania and the world more broadly. I discuss how issues were conceptualised and suggest that participants' social position influenced how complex issues were articulated and problematised.

Participants from the Philippine Group spoke of *cleanliness* as an environmental challenge for Tasmania. One participant said, "I think environmental challenges for me is, like, you have to maintain the cleanliness of the environment here [in Tasmania]". I consider the term 'cleanliness' in the context of English as a second language for participants, as well as in recognition of the diversity of cultural meanings that can be assigned to concepts across cultures (Douglas, 2003). Similar to interpretations made by Douglas (2003), I interpret the concept of cleanliness to relate more to order/predictability/safety/security than to *cleanliness* as a reference to hygiene. The Philippine Group habitus may have been profoundly shaped by a history of the environment as a mechanism of oppression, violence and injustice. For example, Reyes (2014, p. 88) notes that in the Philippines, "only a portion [of the 4000 metric tons of city garbage is] collected with the rest dumped into waterways or burned, creating health and aesthetic problems." In this sense, the Tasmanian environment may be experienced more through its social affordances, such as

security, order, and safety of society, than through its ecological characteristics. This is not the same as saying that these people have no ecological concern for the environment. The significance of order/predictability/safety/security of environments has implications for sustainability discourses that seek to engage people with imaginaries of wild, rugged, natural environments, such as those valorised by environmentalists in Tasmania. For example, environmentalist discourses often use imageries of wilderness and seek to expand ‘natural’ environments. These findings suggest that such discourses could be counterproductive for people who value the order and predictability afforded by ‘clean’ spaces.

The Men’s Group identified and discussed a range of issues at different spatial scales. When discussing how global issues may influence Tasmania, participants spoke about the bullying and discrimination faced by children in their local area. Paul made the comment: “They were racists against those two kids [talking about a local example where two boys were kicked off the bus]; the bus driver kicked them off twice.” The members of this group displayed a lively sense of social justice for people and places in their everyday worlds. This sense of social justice shaped their lives and actions in the way they interacted with systems such as bus services. Questions of equity were taken seriously in this group and engaged participants in ways that connected to their personal experiences.

When Paul from the Men’s Group discussed environmental issues, he spoke of his experience working in a timber industry where practices and attitudes tend to align with anti-environmentalist discourses. While Paul is supportive of the timber industry, he made a point of separating himself from these discourses when he professed to being “more of a greenie”. This was juxtaposed during the focus group with Bob, who self-identified as a “tree-hugger” who did not support the timber industry in

Tasmania. Bob made it known to the group that he aligned with environmentalist discourses that advocate for increased levels of forest conservation in Tasmania. Their perspectives need to be read against a backdrop of a long-standing political history in Tasmania between industry and environmental conservation (Stratford, Armstrong, & Jaskolski, 2003). Both Paul and Bob engaged in a discourse of *balance between environmental conservation and employment*, common to environmentalist discourses in Australian politics¹². Their positions within these debates¹³ were made visible in the focus group – they had aligned themselves as greenie/tree hugger. These descriptors of identity say something about how discourses can encourage simplified and dualist representations of complex dilemmas and identity positions within them, which influenced how both Paul and Bob thought about what was ‘right’.

The Over 65s Group had a particular interest in issues and challenges that were being experienced locally and that affected either them, or those in their social network. In this sense, spatiality was represented by participants through what was tangible, touchable, and observable in their everyday worlds. Participants offered personal anecdotes in the focus group that indicated what they perceived as significant about an issue and suggested the ways that understandings and perceptions come to be made through highly specific frames of reference. In the anecdote below, participants discussed some of the problems associated with increasingly sporadic and unpredictable weather events. Climate change for the participants was largely

¹²For an example, see an interview with Kevin Rudd on *The Observer*, “Prime Minister says Labor is determined to get balance right between industry and the environment” (July, 2013)

¹³As discussed in Chapter 2, debates about forestry in Tasmania tend to polarise arguments between pro-logging and pro-conservation. Beresford (2015) provides a thorough account of recent Tasmanian events in *The Rise and Fall of Gunns Ltd.*

amorphous, abstract in definition but in some ways tangible in the everyday world through *effects*, such as freezing pipes. For example, Patricia says:

There was a lady in the paper the other day and her ceiling all fell in in the house she was going to sell and they said that has happened to about 40 people. I only know of one other. So that's a worry. You know, the cold freezes the pipes over and then all the insulation got wet and the ceiling has got a big bow in it, and the person I know is going to have to replace the ceiling. So you wouldn't want too much of that would you.

Spatial practices changed according to weather conditions. The ability to adapt in these circumstances was predicated on the resources of capital available to support such adaptations, such as money to pay a plumber or knowing alternative ways to keep warm. Weather was similarly discussed in the Philippine Group, however, the cultural context of the group predisposed participants to regard Australian weather conditions as significant, as the following extract demonstrates:

Interviewer: ...we mentioned climate change, do you think that that's a big environmental challenge?

Mary: Yes, we Filipinos do. Because sometimes you have to hang the clothes out and it sunny and then it's cloudy and then you have to get it all in again. You have to check the weather patterns.

Rosa: It just gives you more variety of chores and new ideas for drying clothes inside.

Mary: Yes, but in the Philippines it's ok if you don't listen to the weather. But in here, you have to, you know, listen and watch.

Emma: Because in the Philippines, our weather, always the same. 'Cause, like it's only gets wet and dry. Whatever temperature we have now, tomorrow it will be the same.

For the Philippine Group, climate change translated into personal and local frames. The unpredictability of weather influenced participants' everyday worlds through necessity in adapting spatial practices, such as drying clothes.

Social issues discussed by the Mothers' Group included the way technology was substituted for interacting with people, the lack of jobs available to young people and how they perceived companies taking advantage of people through advertising and marketing. Issues were regarded as *issues* because of the impacts that they had, or potentially could have, on people within their everyday worlds.

Participants of the Mothers' Group displayed high levels of emotion when issues that challenged ideas of appropriate interactions with natural spaces and animals were discussed. When asked what the group considered as environmental challenges, Jessie said: "I get a little bit passionate about the environment and animals and all that sort of stuff and my daughter does too." This was followed up by Heidi who made a point about how bad it is to see the over-industrialisation of spaces and the removal of natural spaces from the urban environment. Later in the discussion, another participant made the point that "we've gotta go back to nature" then immediately apologised, saying: "Sorry, I love Mother Nature." Feeling as though she needed to apologise for her concern about nature, speaks to some norms that regulate the group's habitus. For example, nature may be seen as an environment meant for human use rather than something that should be 'loved'. The idea of 'loving' Mother Nature went against what was perceived to be socially acceptable.

Participants in the Higher Income Cohort discussed a range of social, economic and environmental issues of varying spatial scales including local, national and international. References to technological efficiencies in systems ‘and closed loops’ were discussed as operational moves toward *sustainability*. The understandings of these systems were made possible through the cultural capital and social fields in which participants in this social context were situated. For instance, Roger works in the management team of an international company and must keep up with new technological innovations in waste management. Winston is a leading businessperson who works on national boards in the agricultural sector. The social fields of these two participants in particular creates conditions that encourage understandings of the benefits and possibilities with new systems, including technological innovation. Additionally, research supports the proposition that people in higher socio-economic positions have greater access to resources to participate/engage with environmental challenges (Newman & Fernandes, 2016; Stern, 2000). Aligning with Bourdieu’s conception of socio-economic advantage as tied to distance from necessity, the Higher Income Cohort have resources available to think differently about problems of unsustainability, but this *thinking differently* did not always correspond with conversations about *acting differently*.

The way sustainability dilemmas were made meaningful by participants was largely determined by socially located experiences, for example, through different cultural experiences (e.g., the Philippine Group) or through previous employment (e.g., Paul from the Men’s Group). In the following sections, I explore how everyday worlds influence participants’ engagements with broader narratives related to sustainability. I find that while many participants appeared to use dominant spatial

dualisms, such as that between natural and urban spaces, their interpretations of complex dilemmas extended beyond dualistic framings.

7.2 Representations of Space

I suggest that media representations of issues related to ‘environment and development’ influenced how participants engaged with, or disengaged from, sustainability discourses. This discussion informs the subsequent section that explores participants’ internalised representations of space, which were used to navigate and orient themselves in enacting concepts of sustainability.

7.2.1 Media Representations in Ideas of Environment and Development

The typical number of hours an adult consumes media has been steadily increasing over the last 50 years in modern societies. Latest reports show that across the Australian population over 90 hours of broadcast television is consumed in a month (Oztam, Regional TAM, & Nielsen, 2015). Media studies is a discipline area focused on the relationship between media and society (Deacon & Stanyer, 2015). People select out, engage with and internalise different media possibilities in different ways. At the same time, media have particular powers and ideologies that inform how people come to view social issues (Bailey & Harindranath, 2005). For instance, Hall (1982), argues that media constructs give meaning to events through the active processes of selection, presentation, structuring and shaping of events. Participants referred to media representations throughout the conversations to inform their understandings of problems of unsustainability.

Interactions with media informed how participants came to engage with discourses of sustainability. Engagement with news media was interpreted through participants' habitus, that is, the dialectic of experiences and capital resources influencing the interpretations and engagements in the everyday world. Across different social contexts, there were particular aspects of news media that participants would contest yet, there are other aspects of the same news media that were uncritically accepted. This tended to occur when the news media aligned with participants' own worldviews. In this way, media are themselves part of habitus. The media one consumes is typically differentiated by political and social position, although this remains contested (Hepp, Hjavard, & Lundby, 2015). Implicit here is the idea that, media items are representations of the everyday world accepted as taken-for-granted knowledges. For example, the *environment* was seen as physical, material spaces that existed external to the self and to socially constructed human spaces. These constructions were validated by media representations and reflected doxic ways of being for the advanced-capitalist cultural context. I take these ideas up later in this chapter, when I explore spaces of representations in different constitutions of sustainability.

Participants in the Higher Income Cohort, in their engagements with media representations would deploy territorial concepts of space to determine what might be appropriate relationships between Tasmania and other places/cultures/peoples. In the context of a large Tasmanian company, the group discussed how the Tasmanian public seem to believe that it is socially acceptable for some companies to be taken over by interests located outside of Australia but not for others. The group rarely spoke about their own views, rather, they took on a perspective that spoke on behalf of, or observed about, the Tasmanian community. For example, in the case of a large

company takeover, the group suggested that they “don’t think society has worked out what its rules are yet” in regards to what is and is not acceptable ownership of local businesses. Winston turned to Roger at one point in the conversation and used the American-owned company that Roger works for as an example. While it is acceptable for Roger’s company to be owned by an overseas company, Winston suggests that it is not publicly condoned for the Van Diemen’s Land Company to be taken over by Chinese¹⁴ interests even though “the 190-year-old VDL [Van Dieman’s Land] has always been foreign-owned, first by the British, now by New Zealand interests” (Ryan, 2015, para. 6).

The issue of ownership in the case of the Van Dieman’s Land takeover was significant for the Higher Income Cohort, which may be attributable to the middle class habitus and participants’ globally oriented worldviews. Participants of the Higher Income Cohort tended to be virtually, economically and socially located in spaces beyond the local and in consequence, valued international ventures because of the believed benefits generated through the global economic system. In comparison, the group suggested the wider Tasmanian public is selective about international relations based on perceived prejudices. Similar to discourses of sustainability, the Higher Income Cohort engaged with representations of particular issues in the media across spatial scales. For example, they connected the implications of decisions about local companies into broader questions of international competitiveness. In contrast, other participants lived their lives with boundaries and filters that prescribed a much more limited and particular range of concerns.

¹⁴ This issue gained nation-wide media attention during the time of the interview. Media reports positioned the topic and decisions associated with it as *controversial* (Neales, 2016) with news headings such as, “Expert warns sale of Australia’s largest dairy to Chinese company could be disastrous” (Tabakoff, 2016).

The Over 65s Group perspectives aligned with dominant representations in media. For example, Patricia says: “Well, they’re not gunna turn the [refugee] boats back, are they? So they’re gunna bring them here, aren’t they?”, similar to common discourses in the media at the time of the interviews. These ideas also reflected the policy landscape in Australia regarding *Operation Sovereign Borders* which began in late 2013 (Department of Immigration and Border Protection, n.d.; Shea, 2015).

Media representations positioned refugees as *Other* at the time of the interview (Bolger & Coulter, 2015). In Chapter 2, I describe sustainability discourses that call upon a universal register of political and moral concern (i.e., we should care for people and places around the planet), yet members of the Over 65s Group tended to connect with concerns that had a more local register. This was similar to Jessie from the Mothers’ Group who suggests what was important to her when she says, “I just think look after yourself and your immediate family and your own family...”

Representations of asylum seekers and refugees influenced the way that participants thought about how Tasmania was positioned to respond to global issues. Topics of global scale were thought about in the context of pre-existing concerns in the local community, such as job security and broader resource scarcities. Solutions that were perceived to impede on the everyday worlds of participants or the people that they knew were spoken about negatively. This was illustrated in the way that participants went on to discuss spatial solutions for accommodating refugees in the context of Tasmania's population. Sherryl from the Over 65s Group observed of some refugees that, “they’ve chosen Tasmania. So therefore we don’t want them in the cities, we need them to make cities out of some of our smaller towns.” Sherryl connects her concerns for regional Tasmania (not having adequate employment opportunities) with the potential that refugees may help to address this problem, “well

they've got to build houses and shops so there will be work." Media appear to be one of the ways that participants in the Over 65s Group get their ideas about solutions for problems of unsustainability. Bourdieu (1984, 1990b) notes that the habitus actively incorporates information that correlates with preconceived understandings, which suggests that in many cases people engage with media items that confirm their ideas about the world. Participants from this group grew up in a time when seeking asylum was not common in Tasmania, nor did the media have such a strong presence in everyday lived space. Participants drew on the representations of asylum seekers in a way that supported and reinforced their understandings, as noted by Bourdieu (1990b):

Early experiences have particular weight because the habitus tends to ensure its own constancy and its defence against change through the selection it makes within new information by rejecting information capable of calling into question its accumulated information, if exposed to it accidentally or by force, and especially by avoiding exposure to such information (p. 60-61).

While the previous two groups (the Over 65s Group and the Higher Income Cohort), demonstrated some critical questionings of what was represented in the media, participants in the Men's Group questioned the truthfulness and trustworthiness *of* the media claims. The following extract from the Men's Group is a conversation that unfolds about the perceived decisions that the media make on behalf of its audience. Mike highlights the decisions that media make regarding what is and is not reported. He believes this decision is based upon the relative good/bad nature of a story. Paul draws on the experience of his son's involvement in a car crash to

illustrate his point about decisions media make about the details to include in the story. He suggests that only part of his son's event was included in was reported.

Roy: That's only a small minority and that's the people the media loves to make a big deal out of; where there's a good story, you don't read about it. But if it was a bad story, it's all over the front page and it is talked about for days on days. But a good story you don't hear about it.

Paul: I'll give you a good example of this. The car crash down to the midlands. You tell me what you heard then I'll tell you another part of the story. Cathie was hit by Tom Alic and she died. That's the story you've heard. I'll tell you another part. There was another car that was involved, that was my son. Which was taken out of the story, out of the paper work.

Bob: Why?

Paul: Because my son wasn't hurt or significant to the story. It was only about Cathie. The media only tell you what they want you to know. So as I said, there was another part involved. You're not told because they don't see the relevance for you to know. You've got to be careful, there's more than one avenue to the story. There are racists here but what percentage? It depends on how you look at it.

Lack of trust in the media was supported by participants' everyday experiences of being misled or undervalued by Governments and social systems generally. Research contends that questioning the truthfulness of media occurs more broadly across society and influences how people interact with media items (Kohring & Matthes, 2007; Lee, 2010). This raises questions about the representation of information in sustainability discourses, such as climate change. What are the

implications of presenting information that is difficult to ‘truth’ to people who, because of their experiences, are distrusting of the information source? Adding to this disillusionment was scepticism in the economy to provide jobs that suited the cultural and social capital of participants of the Men's Group. This was shown by Roy when he says:

I look at my boy and I think, where is his future gunna be? If he's not brainy and he doesn't have that education behind him, and he doesn't have the skills in his brain for him to do that, he's just gunna be one of those lost people. If you aren't into that technology, you will just be a lost person.

This has ramifications for the idea that education is necessary to promote sustainability. Education as a way to deliver sustainability is prominent in neoliberal discourses, is cemented by the UN in the Sustainable Development Goals, as shown in Chapter 2 (Tilbury, 2005; United Nations, 2015). For over a decade, literature has reported how working class people have believed the broader education narrative that labour skills are no longer valued and that academic education is the only way of securing employment and a livelihood (Corbett, 2007; Lehmann, 2014). This is shown in Mike's comment by his sense of resignation that ‘getting ahead’ can be achieved by the working class habitus of labour. The old sustainability practices (hard work) are gone and replaced with the sentiment of *braininess*. This kind of talk and thinking was not heard of in the middle class group, with higher education simply assumed to be necessary. In this sense, the middle class knowledge economy habitus that informs sustainability discourses seems to be in tension with the labour-based habitus of many participants of this study.

The Mothers' Group participants shared some of their ideas about the expectations they perceived sustainability discourses had of them as individuals. For example, Margaret discussed global warming and how she believed that the public should not know about it. She reflected on the representation of global warming in the media and suggested that it is negative for the audience because it invokes feelings of guilt and imposes responsibility that she does not believe to be fair. This position is common in the literature regarding responses people have toward global warming (Sandberg, 2011; Sinnott-Armstrong, 2005). The representation of the issue in sustainability discourses has consequences for how Margaret is willing to engage with activities that are presented in culturally dominant discourse as being *good* for reducing global warming, such as taking shopping bags to the supermarket.

Margaret: Can I make a comment on global warming? I don't think we should know about it. Because I think companies are putting it on us, everyday citizens you go to Woolworths these days, when this is more than us, this is bigger than us. I get that, like all these products have been handed to us we use them, and now we're bad because we've been doing what people have been telling us to do over the years. But why are we bad? We trusted these people, we trusted these companies. For me, it comes down to trust and they've really broken it for me. Then you find out, you know you've got boats dumping in the ocean. Factories spewing stuff in the air. Why is that my fault? You know, ok, you're making us plastic bags to carry your groceries home, which we pay for. Which is another thing. You know, we're paying to advertise [the supermarket]. Sorry, no go. I was very happy with my paper bags, thank you very much! I was very happy with my string bags and my boxes years ago! So you took that away from me, you've given me a plastic

bag which pollutes the air and now you're blaming me! You bugger off...I don't think we should be here talking about global warming when all that's going on at that level! How dare they blame me!

In this passage, Margaret explains her life as one lived largely according to the dictates of social authorities, and she reflects a low sense of efficacy and power to influence society. This yielding to authority has been done more out of trust than out intentionality. However, now these authorities, in the form of sustainability discourses, are telling her that her lifestyle is unsustainable, that she is damaging the global environment, and that she needs to take responsibility and radically change her life. She understandably feels judged and betrayed by these discourses, and thus alienated from them. These discourses effectively corrode her sense of autonomy and individual power and then ask her to take responsibility for the failings of everything and everyone. This kind of argument is made by a number of scholars including Nikolas Rose (1999) in his seminal text *Governing the Soul*¹⁵.

In what follows, I consider participant's internalised representations of space. I focus on the Philippine Group and the Higher Income Cohort because they exemplify how internal understandings of space may differ to conceived representations. Up until this point in the chapter, I have presented the views and understandings of participants as they presented themselves in the interviews and focus groups. The following section attempts to understand how spatiality operates in the lived space for participants through internal representations.

¹⁵Rose (1999) argues that over the last fifty years, governments have strategically linked their objectives to the 'private' sphere of the family. This argument is similar to Margaret's concerns that she is being unfairly 'responsibilised' and is being asked to do the work that she believes should be the responsibility of governments and corporations.

7.2.2 Internalised Representations

Spatiality for participants did not rely solely on realist representations of space as shown through media, but consisted of embodied understandings of how to be in the world. Participants constructed mental maps of meaningful spaces and used these understandings to navigate and orient themselves. I use Soja's work in this section to explore my interpretations of participants' subjective experiences and internalised expressions of spatiality, using interview material from the Higher Income Cohort and the Philippine Group as examples.

The Higher Income Cohort

Participants continually referenced their positionality to experiences and knowledges of other places and other spaces. It was through these experiences that meanings were made. For example, Winston locates himself through experiences of another place and makes sense of multiculturalism in Tasmania when he says, "Tomorrow I'm going to Melbourne for 3 days, and it's a multicultural society and we are not that." The identification of Tasmania as being 'not multicultural' comes from his experiences of being in another place. It is through our experiences that we are able to locate ourselves in discourses and spaces (Bourdieu, 1990).

Participants of the Higher Income Cohort at times reflected a cosmopolitan life of global engagement through travel, sourcing of ideas, and information while other groups were characterised by more provincial modes of life which involved relatively less travel and localised concerns. The Higher Income Cohort habitus, through embodied cultural capital, encountered the world through folded and flexed near and far spaces (Nespor, 2004). Nespor (2004) describes this "as point[ing] to the spatial extensiveness and temporal synchronicities of networks within which identities

are attached to people in fateful ways” (p. 310). I suggest that how one sees oneself in the world relates to how one imagines space. To be someone who controls their life or sees themselves in control is quite different from seeing yourself as a victim of circumstance. Participants in the Higher Income Cohort spoke fluently about physical places other than where they lived. For example, Winston and Roger’s occupation required them to engage with the complex economic relations between countries. This folding of spatialities was also evident in conversations about the viability of Tasmanian industries. For instance, Winston uses his knowledge of global energy markets to offer a *solution* to Tasmania’s perceived financial struggles. This proposal is only made possible through his unique capital and experiences; yet, taking a ‘command post’ position seemed to reflect his habitus (Corbett, 2006). Mills (1956, p.4) determined that the “power elite...occupy the strategic command posts of the social structure, in which are now centred the effective means of the power and the wealth and the celebrity which they enjoy”. Shown below, Winston traverses multiple spatialities including the physical, social, economic and political while claiming to have the answer for Tasmania.

To turn this state around financially, I believe we should have another under sea bass link cable because we are limited in what we can transfer. And I would suggest that that was strategic in under sizing it. I would say get rid of Comalco, get rid of TEMCO, get rid of the other one. Get rid of all the power hungry industry. Just get rid of them. Pay every employee 50/100 thousand to go on a holiday. You could sell 800 to a billion dollars power down another line every year. It’s arguably clean and it’s green. You would get 80 to a billion every year. You would wage a war for 5, 6, 7 billion dollars and we

could put in the infrastructure of the state and suddenly the state would turn around. But nobody in the political environment is going to have the guts to sack however many hundreds of people.

Winston speaks impersonally about the employees of these companies whose livelihoods he is willing to sacrifice in the face of the ‘greater good’ of Tasmania, under a guise of being ‘clean and green’. Similarly, Roger infers a position of authority when he discusses the Tasmanian population:

The real population problem is replacement for Tasmania and who you are bringing in and looking after the population with what we need to do. In some ways, who you bring in, where you put them and what they do becomes important for the whole planet; it’s not that we are overpopulated, it’s only the distribution that is exhausted.

Drawing on Bourdieu’s work, Holt (1998) makes the point that “all interactions necessarily are classifying practices; that is, micropolitical acts of status claiming in which individuals constantly negotiate their reputational positions” (p. 4). Participants of the Higher Income Cohort reflected an internal representation that enmeshed spatialities and folded space. Participant comments suggested that they saw themselves sitting elevated, in the ‘command post’ (Mills, 1956), looking down over the state of Tasmania. The world was large but at the same time, conceivable. Participants identified problems of sustainability in ways that reflected this folding and flexing of space. Discourses of sustainability reflect similar abstractions of time and space through talk and spatial representations (e.g., universalism,

intergenerational, common futures). I contend that the origins of sustainability discourses align with the Higher Income Cohort habitus and these ways of thinking were not necessarily reflected across all the groups in the study.

The Philippine Group

Australia was largely viewed by participants in the Philippine Group as a place of opportunity and security. Comments such as, “Filipinos are very blessed to be here in Australia because it’s very different to the Philippines, education is of a higher standard here, the health system are like better here” (Emma), were common throughout the interviews.

Participants continually referenced their understandings of Australia through their understandings and experiences of the Philippines. Participants oriented themselves in social space through a constructed spatiality most strongly formed through the emotions and knowledge of a geographically distant place. While physically situated in Australia, participants located themselves in the world through their connection with the Philippines. The Philippines formed an internal geography that participants’ worldviews, perceptions and understandings were constructed from. Internal geographies influenced how participants approached particular questions relevant to sustainability, such as how to help each other. Rosa’s example from Chapter 6 about giving up her garage to her neighbour in a time of need is evidence of this. The cultural norms of the Philippines are embodied in Rosa’s internal geography and influence how she perceives and responds even in a place geographically distant from where this cultural norm originated. Participants navigated their expectations of how things should be in the world through their internal geographies. Yet, similarly to how Bourdieu (1990a) describes habitus – internal geographies are in a continual

process of becoming, influenced by and influencing constructions of the everyday world.

The Philippine Group highlight the mono-cultural assumptions often embedded within sustainability discourses. As discussed in Chapter 2, neoliberal sustainability discourses are positioned largely by economic growth ontologies and individualise the people they position in social space (Dryzek, 1997; Middlemiss, 2014). The internal geographies of the Philippine Group provide some insight into how cultural understandings and ways of being in the world are embodied in habitus and remain, even across distant geographies. Many of the women in this group had been in Australia for over 10 years, yet their cultural understandings remain embodied in their ways of being in the everyday world. I problematise the individualising assumptions of sustainability discourses and their capacity to engage multicultural, advanced-capitalist societies.

The following section explores the role of lived experience in constructions of internal geographies and perceived spaces. I position *sensing* as a spatial practice and suggest that using the senses is a socially and culturally located practice (Macnaghten & Urry, 1998).

7.3 Spatial Practices

Soja (1996) argues that, “the spatial practice of a society is revealed through the deciphering of its space” (p. 66). Modernity encourages ways of knowing (i.e., expert knowledge¹⁶) the world to be external from the individual body. For example,

¹⁶ Anthony Giddens uses the twin ideas of expert systems (professionals) and symbolic tokens (money, credentials, awards) as central to his understandings of late modernity in *The Consequences of Modernity*.

ill health is legitimated by a health practitioner while car repairs are conducted by a qualified mechanic. Yet, participants suggested that it was through personal experiences that knowing was validated. This reflects similar ideas in critical discourses of sustainability that denote problems as cultural problems of alienation from nature and each other, remedied by re-evaluating and redefining these relationships (Biro, 2005; Caradonna, 2014; Davison, 2001; Fischer & Black, 1995; Macnaghten & Urry, 1998). In this section, the role of personal experiences in evaluating and making sense of questions of sustainability is explored.

7.3.1 Lived Experiences

In saying ‘lived experience’, I refer to experiences that have been *felt* by the body, in some way. How lived experience was used to make meaning of problems of sustainability varied among participants, although most participants tended to talk about phenomena by drawing on the information they had directly experienced. What was considered ‘a problem or concern’ was mediated and informed by lived experiences. This was particularly evident when participants spoke about the weather in relation to climate change.

Weather events were a feature in the media at the time of the interview, including reports about predictions of the hottest summer, and claims that we are presently in the coldest winter, and so on. In this way, media coverage may have served as a ‘trigger stimulus’ to participants’ perceptions (Erbring, Goldenberg, & Miller, 1980). However, whether it was the prevalence of media representations that influenced the prominence of weather in conversations, or whether this prominence in media was from unusual experiences of weather is irrelevant to this discussion. Along similar lines, Soja (1996) notes the dialectical relationship between spatial practices

and spaces of representation. As follows, I suggest these questions more importantly remain: What lived experiences are used by participants in making sense of sustainability questions? How do these experiences mediate understandings of ‘problems’ of un/sustainability?

Participants’ experiences of the weather tended to reflect socially located differences. For instance, the Philippine Group value the ability to wash and dry clothes in an efficient way. As a result, the weather was a focal point of conversations because it was no longer predictable, which impacted on when and how clothes could be dried. In the case of the Over 65s Group, the weather was significant because of the influence it had on living conditions. Stories were told of friends who have had pipes freeze over and burst which caused significant disruption in their lives, particularly because of the restricted access to economic capital to remedy the problem. Winston from the Higher Income Cohort worked in the dairy industry and spoke of changing rain patterns. This shows how habitus inflects the experience people had of the same phenomena (weather), which resulted in different interpretations and practices. In consequence, the spatial practices were context specific; for example, the Philippine Group explored alternative ways of drying clothes rather than on the washing line outside, while the Over 65s Group discussed ways of regulating temperature in the home in more efficient ways. Articulating this point, Bourdieu (1989) notes that people, “recognize no reality other than those that are available to direct intuition” (p. 15).

Personal experiences or connections to participants’ social, cultural or economic capital were powerful indicators of how topics would be discussed. People assumed validity of information if they had received this information via direct sensory experience (Macnaghten & Urry, 1998). Information received from third

party sources such as radio, television or written text encompassed culturally located discourses used to communicate the phenomenon. Recognising the significance of people's personal experiences in interpretations of sustainability further problematises the effectiveness of universalist claims of what it means to live sustainably, in engaging across multiple subjectivities.

7.3.2 Social Networking

Throughout history, technology has influenced how people communicate with each other. Social media is the latest in communication technology. However, unlike previous technological advances, social networking has encouraged and enabled communication in ways that were historically impossible, that is, for those who have the relative capital to access and make use of it. Media theorists now refer to audiences of this new communicative context as “prod-users” and “pro-sumers” as a way to account for the creative and interactive nature of online activities (Fenton, 2016, p. 123). This section discusses the varied approaches participants utilised with social networking technology across matters relevant to sustainability.

Social networks are used differently by differently located people. For instance, participants in the Mothers' Group and also the Higher Income Cohort note the technologies that change communication practices. This idea is shared by Winston below when he reflects on the responses people now have to geographically distant issues:

So if we roll ourselves back 10 years, 20 years, yes, we got news we saw the war bombings. But it was the headline. It was just the information. Whereas now with the advent of social media and the speed at which that it comes

through you can get the head line on day 1 and then day 1.1 you actually know how it affects people and the feelings of the people in those areas. Like France, you understood what they were feeling about being on the streets. But now we are going onto the streets and we are gunna show solidarity. Then everybody globally jumped on board and agreed with it. So before, lack of knowledge, and you talked about the terrors we're against in the war and they probably still are. But with the advent of social media you can go, oh hang on, they actually think the same way we do.

Winston proposes that there has been a change in the way people think about information or events that are geographically distant because of technological innovations. He suggests that people are now able to engage with geographically distant phenomena emotively and meaningfully through internet based social networking. This suggests that social networking platforms have the capacity to fold space in a way that brings geographically distant individuals close together (Guo & Saxton, 2014; Scott, 2017). Winston presents two lines of thought to support his claim; first, that the information we receive about an event is different than it was previously. Here, Winston locates himself temporally and uses his previous experiences to make sense and evaluate the technology. He suggests that the information received through social networking is largely from *the people* involved in the phenomenon. This supports many scholars who advocate social networking as a communicative tool that is “for the people, by the people” (Beckett 2011; Gillmor 2004; Rheingold 2002; Shirky 2008). Second, Winston claims that social networking exposes people to events and information in a timely way, with the insinuation that in

response to this timeliness, people are able to partake in some civic activism to make change in that moment through ‘solidarity’ and ‘going to the streets’.

Significantly for Winston, he believes that social networking changes the emotional response of people engaged with it. This suggests that representations of space (such as the way sustainability dilemmas are represented in media) are working to change the spatial practices in the participation of, and response to socially networked events/phenomenon. However, social positioning tends to influence what social networking people are engaged with, and what events/phenomenon they are interested in (Duggan & Brenner, 2013; Sensis, 2016). Many scholars have reported on the confirmation bias that proliferates in social media platforms such as Facebook (Nickerson, 1998). As previously discussed, in the Higher Income Cohort context, the spatial scale of the everyday world was at times more globally oriented, exemplified by Winston when he gives an example of the potential response to the travesties that occurred in France.

The potential of social networking to create perceived positive change was also discussed in the Mothers’ Group. The group noted how communication technologies have changed relationships between consumers and the market, which suggests that there is now a greater sense of accountability of companies onto consumers. This was understood in connection with the speed that opinions and ‘voice’ could be circulated. These ideas are found in ethical consumer and sustainable consumption discourses that promote consumers to ‘have a voice’ and ‘vote with your wallet’. Heidi goes on to talk about her belief in social networking’s ability to influence practice when she says:

I mean having a voice... So I will give an example, like this little girl 5-year-old, she did a colouring in competition for Officeworks and so she was sick and she spent all day doing it and all the next day doing it and her mum said, "Ok, well we'll let you hand it in." So she went to Officeworks the next day or the next two days and she handed it in. The little girl gave it to the person working and the staff member grabbed it and opened it up and said, "Oh, that's a bit messy." Or something like that. And anyway, that little girl bawled her eyes out and cried and cried and cried. So her mum posted it on Facebook and literally put Officeworks on there. She said, "I don't want to get this person sacked, I don't want my daughter to win, I just wanted the fairness", or whatever it was. So then heaps of people were commenting on it. Heaps of people were liking it. So the business said to her, like, "Give us your number and we'll give you a call," and they ended up saying that they would come round to her house and fix it in person. So just something like that, a voice can be used as something good. And when somebody else sees that. They think, you know what? Yes, that person at Officeworks done wrong, but the way they handled it was still good, so I will still shop there. But if it didn't get handled like that then that's it, like, we'd stop shopping there, you know, like that sort of thing. Having a voice it can come out as a good way. From both sides, from a two-way conversation. So I think that's what I mean by voice.

Interviewer: So you think it achieves something by having a voice?

Heidi: Yeah, because that mother, you know, got her little daughter, which may mean nothing to everyone else, but for her child it does. So I think that it does. It can be used for bad, but like everything else, it can be used for good.

Heidi's reflections illustrate her belief in the potential of social networking to give everybody 'a voice'. The significance of Heidi's story is about participants'

sense of social empowerment and efficacy. It has been argued that some people are disengaged from sustainability discourses because they are more generally disengaged from governmental discourses and processes, feeling like they have little ability to influence their political/social worlds (Dryzek, 1997; Fischer & Black, 1995). The story from Heidi then gives an insight into ways people might gain a sense of a public voice that certain social locations in society, such as the middle class, take for granted. This assumption also appears in discourses of sustainability in calls for ‘agents’ of change and deliberative or ecological democracy (Dryzek, 2013; Lyons, Smuts, & Stephens, 2001).

While there are mixed reports in the literature in regard to the ability of social networking to be used to effect change (Guo & Saxton, 2014; Scott, 2017), there was a general consensus in the Mothers’ Group and the Higher Income Cohort that social networking does have potential to influence how people respond to questions of sustainability. Yet, there exists a danger that social media is becoming a restricted platform that “narrowcasts” views to a small circle of acquaintances or people in limited affinity networks. In consequence, this may create a fiction that we operate in larger spaces than we *actually* do (Cammaerts, 2015; Kant, 2014). However, this was not reflected in participants’ experiences or considerations of the capacities of technology to engage with questions of sustainability in this research.

7.4 Spaces of Representation

Soja (1996) argues that there are spaces, both real and imagined, that act simultaneously to influence experiences and ways of being in the world. In this section, I explore how sustainability discourses take up particular narratives of global space that are interpreted in different ways, in different social locations. I also explore

how participants located themselves in a global system and how the idea of ‘global’ - *the ‘global space’* - was expressed by participants in different ways connected to their lived experiences. All of this was influenced by neoliberalism and implicated how people made connections to sustainability discourses in imagined spaces.

Common across participants’ ideas, was the influence of *lived experiences* in informing positionality. For instance, women in the Philippine Group spoke of how leaving their family in the Philippines and migrating to Australia evoked a complex way of connecting through space. For example, participants spoke of longing for ingredients from the Philippines to add to food dishes, wanting nothing more than to have family residing in Australia. For example, Mary comments:

My parents just live in the Philippines; they just live there together. It’s only my mummy and dad there and they are getting older. They are 65-something and I want to be bringing them here for a holiday before they are getting too sick or too old or something like that.

Participants of the Philippine Group largely located their imaginaries in understandings of what was necessary for daily living and in questions of relationships, in comparison to their experiences of the Philippines. For example, Mary notes in relation to environmental challenges that, “I am always comparing to the Philippines where I came from.” Participants, including those from the Philippine Group, did not locate themselves globally. Participants located themselves according to their social and ecological relationships, such as connections to family near or far. Participants did not acknowledge or give thought to how they were connected to global ecosystems through their daily consumption practices. For instance, when

Poppy notes her involvement with a babywearing group¹⁷, she did not note the material requirements needed to participate, or consider the complex journey of the products created – thought patterns advocated for in discourses of sustainable consumption. Participants did not seem to recognise how their everyday practices were embedded in neoliberal doxa, where practices perceived as local in scale were ever more embedded within global policies, institutions, flows of media, supply chains and marketisation (Mansvelt, 2010).

In the Men's Group, participants saw themselves as disconnected from the global systems discussed. For example, Bob enacts his understandings of perceived spaces when he says, "I think there will be trouble in the Middle East. I think it's quids on. The Russians and the Yanks will be head on. I think it is a powder keg. I don't know about China." To which Paul responds, "It's just re-educational programs [that are needed] in other countries." Similarly to Holden & Hicks (2007) and van der Linden (2015), I found that unless there was some personal implication or link to personal experience, participants rarely commented on the implications of issues across scales, or reacted emotively to globalised issues.

In comparison, the Higher Income Cohort would *plug* conversations about local issues into the global system. For example, when discussing industries in Tasmania, conversations addressed global competitors, export opportunities, and global phenomena that may influence the industry at the time. For example, when Roger says:

¹⁷ A group for parents who enjoy walking together using baby carrying devices; for example see <http://carry.org.au/>

I just don't think that from the point of view from transport, wages, all sorts of reasons, you can't sustain those sorts of industries here. You are in competition with massive pulp mills in Thailand and China and the quality of paper used to be, I started working in the paper mill in 1993 and the quality of paper in Australia was so much better than Indonesia and Thailand. But, during the 7 years before I left they just caught up and passed. For the price. I remember for the last couple of years I was working for the paper industry, there was a ream of Reflex in the shop in Burnie from Burnie that was \$9 a ream and the ones from Indonesia were \$3 and it was the same product. And there was just no way around it. And it was the beginning of the end of closing it.

In the quote, Roger reflects on how practices of the past, i.e. producing local paper pulp, is no longer viable due to changes in global exchange practices. Participants in the Higher Income Cohort made explicit connections to global systems by virtue of their imputed global social position and understanding of that space. Participants in the Higher Income Cohort had a complex array of global understandings embedded in their cultural capital, most likely accrued from their experiences and their qualifications (Bourdieu, 1986). Many had been overseas and could draw on multiple experiences to construct meanings. In addition, a global perspective is an explicit aim of formal/higher education and the educational attainment was highest in this group (Killick, 2012; Tye, 2014).

While all participants operated within global systems, some participants discussed the complex connections between local and global spatialities. Those who positioned everyday practices in global systems mainly did so through material

complexities of global commodity chains. The connection between spatialities tended to centre on the experiences and the social and ecological relationships of the individual. However, as I will discuss in the following section, space was predominantly conceived as a site *in and of* people within the capitalist system.

In Chapter 4, participants engaged with the concept of space through places of meaning. Participants spoke with complexity when describing the social fields that made up their everyday worlds. Yet, the necessities of the habitus and the social fields meant that spatial systems were structured by *relevance*. The everyday world of participants included movements in space that contained multiple real and imagined spatialities: emotional spaces, physical spaces, natural spaces all present at one time, in one schema. An example of this came from Fiona from the Philippine Group, when she discusses her decision to stay home with her son:

Well it's better, just spending time with my husband too. Maybe if I'm working, because aged care is very hard.... Yeah, just hard. Just exhausting. So you get in here and you just want to sleep. You don't have time for your child, you don't have time for your husband. You can't do the dishes; you can't fold the clothes.

In this example, Fiona reflected conflicted feelings, considerations for what is best for herself and her family, how to navigate and how to compromise competing priorities. Fiona engages across multiple spatialities, however, all of which situated and considered within the social-economic rationale bound to her daily necessities.

Participants were predominantly situated in social space in ways that highlighted their concerns about the self and family. This was exemplified by Jessie,

when she said, “in your own little bubble, in your own little family bits and pieces that you have to do. You get so focused on doing your own thing.” Nevertheless, participants brought into conversations multiple conceptualisations of space to locate themselves. The Men’s Group deliberated on effective strategies for *improving* the environment, at the same time, these ideas were filtered through a lens of economic viability. Paul gave the example of how he had recently replaced his old car which produced a lot of pollution through engine smoke. He goes on to suggest that everyone should be doing this, and recommends that the government provide subsidies so people can do this, “Like in America, they offered a subsidy for anyone who got rid of their car that was made prior to 1975.” This example demonstrates the economic logic at the forefront of Paul’s mind as a way of advancing sustainability practices, similar to rationale employed in sustainable consumption discourses (Kopnina, 2016). Yet, the motivations and values that individuals place on social and environmental actions varied.

Reflecting back to Heidi’s example of picking up rubbish explored in Chapter 6, her performance traversed multiple spatialities, including the natural, social and emotional. Heidi was motivated to perform in the public field for a primarily social motive, to protect others from windblown litter, yet at the same time, she interconnected spatialities in the way she spoke about this action. Heidi’s action engaged multiple spatialities at the same time and it was from this interconnected receipt of information that she made her decision (Maani & Maharaj, 2004).

7.5 Summary

Space is inherent to questions of sustainability forcing human and other-than-human migration among many other planetary concerns. As summarised by Soja (1996, p. 1):

We are, and always have been, intrinsically spatial beings, active participants in the social construction of our embracing spatialities. Perhaps more than ever before, a strategic awareness of this collectively created spatiality and its social consequences has become a vital part of making both theoretical and practical sense of our contemporary life-worlds at all scales, from the most intimate to the most global.

In this chapter, I have responded to the research question, '*How does habitus influence engagement with questions of sustainability?*' with Soja's trialectic which includes representations of space, spatial practices and spaces of representations. People are connected through multiple material, social and economic systems; yet spaces of representations are continually made and unmade through the everyday experience, which Bourdieu calls habitus. Through the concept habitus, Bourdieu connects experience to deeper layers of social space. The work of Soja allows for further analysis of the multiple overlapping layers through which space can and should be understood. For instance, the products and experiences participants engaged in were often globally produced/connected. Yet the processes of production/connection that are hidden in these products and experiences tended not to figure in the imaginaries of participants because of a disconnect of these products and experiences in *lived* space.

I have argued that culturally legitimated representations of space, such as those presented in media, are influential to some degree in the way participants understand and produce lived space. I claimed that representations of space become positively reinforced in lived spaces. At the same time, I have shown the influence that individual's values and motivations have in the spatial trialectic (Soja, 1996). As Bourdieu argues:

The reason why submission to the collective rhythms is so rigorously demanded is that the temporal forms or the spatial structures structure not only the group's representation of the world but the group itself, which orders itself in accordance with this representation (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 163)

I claimed that spatial practices were not fixed, but can transform in novel and innovative ways that act to challenge previous responses to questions of sustainability. Social networking was discussed by participants as a space of potential, hope and power where *voice* could be found. I argued that spatial and temporal folding were a distinctive feature in participants' conceptualisations of what social networking was, and what it could enable.

In the next chapter, I respond again to research question two through an exploration of temporality. Spatiality and temporality are inherently connected, as I have already indicated in some conversations presented here. I take up some of these threads, such as how conceptualising futures influenced approaches to questions of sustainability, and I further explore previous experiences in regulating habitual dispositions. In addition, I consider how time is present in everyday worlds, as well as

the implications that constructions of time have on participants' everyday practices in relation to questions of sustainability.

Chapter 8

“Time Rich” ... in the Future: Implications for Sustainability

In this chapter, I explore how experiences of time influence approaches to questions of sustainability. As noted in Chapters 1 and 2, sustainability is a temporal concept, one that questions past and present actions in the light of future consequences yet, the word ‘sustainability’ only became a popular term in the late 1970s and has since grown exponentially.

The concept of time is embedded in discourses of sustainability through definitions of sustainability that purport to sustain ‘something’ into the future (Jacobs, 1999; Relph, 2004). Time is referred to explicitly in the Brundtland definition of sustainable development by reference to: “meet[ing] the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). Time and temporality were dominant themes identified during analysis. I position ‘time’ as the social construct that organises how we think

about ‘temporality’, or the movement, experience and orientation that is inherent in human experience (Heidegger, 1996).

In section 8.1, I present some of the stories that participants shared with me about what they felt were significant moments in their lives. I do this because it informs more broadly how it is that people come to think about and experience concepts of sustainability. Often, participants would note that a significant memory or event has stayed with them or has influenced them at other times in their lives, lending support to Bourdieu’s theorisation that past experiences inform the embodied beliefs, values and dispositions that he describes as *habitus*. Section 8.2 explores conceptions and experiences of the ‘now’. I claim the present is an enfolding of the past, present and future but claim that present moments tend to be lived *through* rather than something lived *for*.

The concept of sustainable development establishes intergenerational needs as a priority and assumes the need to envisage a sustainable future. Section 8.3 contributes to understandings of how people negotiate ideas of selfhood, specifically in relation to questions of a collective future across socially diverse contexts. I claim that the positionality of participants informed the ways in which they understood themselves in relation to the future. A personal future is conceptualised as the life lived by the self, including connections in social and physical space, while a collective future encompasses essentially everything else (Foster, 2003; Rasmussen, 2011).

Section 8.4 discusses findings in the context of sustainability concepts, quality of life, equity and futurity. I argue that understandings of time were socially located and connected with how participants encountered sustainability.

8.1 Recollections of the Past

At multiple points throughout his scholarship, Bourdieu asserted that past experiences inform dispositions and ways of being in the world in the present (Bourdieu, 1990a, 1990b, 1984). Participants reflected a longing for the past through their recollections and ways of talking about questions of sustainability. In their accounts of sustainability, participants reflected back on ‘how things were’ as a means of defining *how things should be*. In this section, I discuss how life experiences were brought into conversation by participants and claim that these experiences significantly informed how imaginaries of the future were constructed.

The significant moments that participants recollected were varied across everyday life events; however, all these moments connected in some way to the themes presented in Chapter 5. Across the stories, there was similarity in what constituted a significant moment. As the interviewer, I did not define what ‘significant’ meant. Participants brought their own interpretations of the term when asked the question in the interview, ‘What are some of the significant or defining moments that you can recall in your life so far?’ Merriam and Clark (1993) assert that for experiences to be significant, they must contain personal affective significance and be subjectively valued by the individual. That is, they challenged feelings of social estrangement and isolation.

Life experiences that were significant remained influential in the present and informed what futures were imagined. For example, Bob from the Men’s Group, spoke about his experience of prison and the loss of his family after a marriage break up.

The end of my marriage was probably a very significant part of my life because, funnily enough, I ended up in prison for 7 ½ months due to my immature actions at the end of my marriage... That was a pretty sobering part of my life and that really woke me up that I had to pull my socks up. So I lost in that, I lost my children and I suppose I lost a wife.

Bob's infers a transformation in how he values and has relationships in life, when he recollects on needing "to pull his socks up" after his divorce. This experience also results in realisations about what is important in life and how he wants to be in the world. While a negative experience for Bob, he developed a new sense of value for social connection and encouraged him to work hard in creating and maintaining social relationships.

Sarah, from the Higher Income Cohort, recalled a moment on a family holiday where she first witnessed a homeless person being abused. "Since then I've always sort of had that in the back of my mind so I feel like I should, even if I am being lazy or selfish, I feel like I should make an effort to help people." Sarah's worldview expanded after witnessing a person, who she perceived as vulnerable, being beaten up. This experience stirred in Sarah a compulsion for social justice that is centrally relevant to ideas of sustainability. This expansion brought her to a point where she could not go back to being the person she was before, i.e., a person who might let things pass by. Instead she became a 'bigger person', who could no longer walk by something which she knew to be unjust. Sarah carried this experience into her present and into future images of who she wants to be and what social justice means and looks like.

Rosa, from the Philippine Group, speaks about separating from her first husband as a significant moment in her life. She notes that it was significant because, “it shaped me into a different person. Your world is gone, then you’ve got to get it back again.” These moments suggest that participants valued experiences in time because of the impact their experiences had on some aspect of their way of viewing and/or ways of being-in-the-world (Heidegger, 1996). These experiences provided participants opportunities for defining what were appropriate actions and ways of being in everyday worlds. It was through these experiences that participants were able to build a sense of self. Merriam and Clark (1993) in their study on significant learning experiences use the concepts of expansion and transformation of self to explore moments regarded as meaningful for their participants and potential reasons why. Similarities are evident between their study and my research, particularly in the claim that for moments to be significant, they must be subjectively valued by the learner. Within each of the participant narratives, the moments discussed, and the meanings given to these moments, were diverse and contextually dependent on participants’ social location.

While this section has focused on significant moments identified by participants, everyday experiences were similarly important. Bourdieu (1984) argued that our experiences are embodied and that they inform our ways of being and seeing. While the moments presented above either expanded or transformed some aspect of participants’ sense of self, equally as significant to questions of sustainability are the everyday moments that do not enter consciousness because they are habitually embodied and taken-for-granted in participants’ lives. In the next section, I consider how participants experienced and gave meaning to the present.

8.2 Locating the Present

Most participants seemed to long for what was (the past), or for what could be (the future). Models from psychology claim that individuals can have different temporal foci, which can be loosely grouped as: present time perspectives, past time perspectives or future time perspectives (Keough, Zambrardo, & Boyd, 1999; Milfont & Demargue, 2015; Zimbardo & Boyd, 2008). This conceptualisation was a useful framing; however, I note that perspectives are not fixed and are always subject to the conditions of the field.

Participants in the Over 65s Group, suggested that previous practices from ‘their day’ were better than what occurred in the world today. When asked what had changed over the last 30 years, participants went on to say:

Sherryl: I’d just like to say that I lived in the best time. I’m quite sure I did.

Wendy: Yeah, we did. We did.

Interviewer: Why do you say that?

Wendy: Well there wasn’t the drugs around, for a start.

Susan: Well they were around but they didn’t bring them out like they do now.

Patricia: You go out, and you didn’t have to lock your door.

Sherryl: Yes, you could leave your house unlocked. That is how our parents were brought up and they brought us up the same way.

Sherryl: You don’t have to have this. Now days they have got a motorcar at 16.

In this conversation, participants spoke about practices of safety (evidenced by the reference to drugs and home security) and how living now is more unsafe than what it was in the past. Participants challenged traditional discourses of consumption when they note material consumption practices of people today. This continued when practices of saving and thrift were discussed.

Patricia: And the other big thing is that people have credit card[s]. And they put everything on credit and they don't save up and buy anything. Christmas comes and they go in the shop and where they were gunna buy something for your Christmas present for \$5; oh, there's something there for \$10 because I can put it on the credit card. Then comes January, and they've gotta pay all that money back and they haven't got it. If they'd only had that cash in their hand, they would've only spent what they had. And that's a big catch. And the interest. And people get married now and instead of having a nice little house and saving up for their carpet, they've gotta move into their new house with all the carpet down and their new fridge. They can't just wait and get a thing. You know, we'd save up our money and buy a new thing and be that thrilled because you've got a new fridge or something, you know. But no, they don't do that now. They've got to have the biggest and the best when they start out.

Wendy: I still save up for my holidays and things, even though I've got the money.

Patricia: I've got the money to go, but I still save up the money if I go away.

Participants expressed concern that people could now 'spend money today and pay for it tomorrow'. Participants talked about their judiciousness towards the future in similar ways to sustainability discourses that talk about drawing down on stored

ecological capital stocks (Caradonna, 2014; Uhl, 2013). Participants suggested that their own practices had remained the same in the ways they save for the things that they want, even though they “have the money”. The practices of material consumption advocated for by participants in the Over 65s Group resembled simple living sustainability discourses. Yet, participants did not suggest that these practices were ‘better for the environment’, rather, because those were the practices they were familiar with and seemed, to them, to generate greater appreciation and excitement in life. They attributed this to necessities of the era and also to what was viewed as possible. Which was reflected by Wendy when she says, “In our days you really couldn’t have it so you didn’t worry about it.” Patricia and Tom both noted that this was a good thing and that, “(Patricia) yes it was different [and] (Tom) we were quite happy.”

Participants from the Mothers’ Group similarly suggested in conversation that past practices should be continued in the present and into the future. At a number of points in the conversation, Sandy suggested the need to “go back to basics”. When asked what the basics were, Jessie replied:

I just think you just personally, with yourself and your immediate family and your own family, if you teach them about the values that you grew up with...I guess in a way, we’re lucky we grew up with a huge family, because it was nothing for grandma to [say] ‘take your elbows off the table’, ‘take your hat off the table’, and you know, you remember it today. You know, you still do it, but you remember grandma used to always say take your elbows off the table!

Jessie draws attention to the way that morals and norms of behaviour are passed on through generations. For Jessie, a sustainable practice is a passing on of previous ways of being into the next generation, yet in discourses of sustainability, often it is practices of the past that are viewed to be problems of unsustainability. At a later point in the conversation, Jessie reminisces on the ways that people came together in her youth. She notes that these activities were no longer prominent in her family and suggests the cost of recreational activities as a reason why. Perhaps though, the commodification of previously non-commercialised activities and places (for example access to certain beaches) may offer another explanation of why these activities are no longer prominent (Burns & Graefe, 2006; Lamborn, Smith, & Burr, 2017).

We had the beach, we all went on trips, we went on boat rides and ute rides, we did everything together. And that's a problem I think today, because there's nowhere for people to take their family without it costing them an arm and a leg. Of a Christmas time and we would sit down and our family was big enough to fill the Albert Hall and there was a big long Henry VIII table sort of thing. And we would have crayfish, but we were the poorest family there. You know and this day and age, you know no one does that.

What is evident in Jessie's reflections is how she longed for the practices that brought family together and shaped understandings of what family meant, which, for Jessie, is not as strong in today's practices of togetherness. In the Men's Group, comments reflected similar themes of longing for the past, particularly in reference to

questions of sustainability, such as social connectedness. For example, when Paul states his belief that:

... [The way people communicate] will revert back [from social media, such as Facebook]. It will get to a point where people will get sick of it. I honestly do. I think it is a bit of a cycle. They will want one-on-one contact again. I think it will get to a point where it has to go back.

In the interviews, participants were asked, ‘what was important in the present and if/how they pursued these things currently’. I draw heavily on the conversations from this question in the following section.

When I searched for literature on ‘living in the moment’, I found that this phrase tended to be most commonly used in medicine. Palliative care, Alzheimer’s research, dementia care, oncology research all tended to use this phrase to depict the change in temporal positioning that occurs when mortality or our ways of being in the world are disrupted, or when the future is limited or even defined for the patient. Yet, in comparison, participants present moments tended to be lived *through* rather than something lived *for*. To explore this further, I draw on Loewan Walker’s (2014) concept of ‘the living present’.

8.2.1 The Living Present

The living present is a concept founded on post-structural theorising that denotes the *present* as a stretching of time between past and future. It is the contraction of experiences that contribute to the sense of the moment and in the same moment, the expectations of those yet to come (Deleuze, 1994 cited in Loewan

Walker, 2014). I was drawn to this concept because it captures the essence of my interpretations of the data. Participants spoke primarily about what had been, or what they were working towards, or what they were hoping for in the future. The present moment was largely absent from these conversations. Yet, drawing on the concept of the *living present* helps to make sense of this phenomenon. When I was thinking with this concept, I found that the present was not absent for participants, rather, its absence in conversation was a reflection of its *livingness*. Participants embodied a living present through continually referencing current actions with past situations and future intentions.

As a condition of the neoliberal narrative, introduced in Chapter 2, the present is positioned to serve the needs and desires of moments temporally located in the future. Loewan Walker (2014) puts forward a claim that a futures-oriented perspective tends to create a totalising orientation. What this means is that a vision of the future increasingly defines the present, or at least shapes how it is understood. It also may support an ‘end justified the means’ orientation to life, which has implications (such as environmental degradation) for practices of sustainability in the present. For instance, a society of people focused on accruing wealth for a lengthy old age may not support sustainable practices day-to-day. In consequence, looking forward, in preparation for, or in anticipation of future events brings these imaginaries into the present moment.

For example, participants continually thought about the futures of their children, retirement with their partner or the next bill to be paid. In the extract below, I detail a conversation I had with Poppy. Poppy speaks about her inner conflict in wanting to work and wanting to stay at home. However, the anticipated economic

pressures of ‘tomorrow’ are at the forefront of her mind and guide her actions in the present.

Interviewer: So what is one thing that you think would make your life easier or better?

Poppy: If I could just have peace of mind, it creates stability in, how do you say it, the basic needs that you have. You have the peace of mind that you will have this tomorrow. That you will be able to pay for the bills, or have more time with the kids or family itself.

Interviewer: You don’t have that now?

Poppy: Only probably because I’m stuck at work. Because I really wanted to leave work, but I couldn’t at the moment. It’s a bit stressing because I really wanted to work to help my sister in the Philippines.

Interviewer: So really it comes down to financial security.

Poppy: I think you have to sacrifice one. You cannot compromise with work and family and then kids. You cannot really juggle, one you have to sacrifice...I mean, peace of mind, if I’m at work I don’t mind if I have some help with trust with her. You are able to focus at work not stressing or anything.

Poppy describes her desire to be present with her family but, at the same time, feeling compelled to work to financially support her family back in the Philippines. Regardless of social location, people tended to enact a futures-oriented temporality in their daily lives, always thinking and planning for the moments to come. This was also described by Sandy from the Mothers’ Group, who was concerned about her children’s ability to afford their own homes.

You worry about your kids. How much they've gotta do now just to buy their own place...Here's Heidi buying their unit, they're struggling...They are buying it so they've got something for the kids, you know, for the future and all of that and they don't get no help.

Sandy notes how her daughter's actions are primarily led by the desire to secure housing for her children in the future. Similarly, Poppy reflects trepidation in not meeting the goals she set for her imagined future when she says,

If you could stretch a little more of yourself to do all the chores, to do all this, to be able to finish the plan, to be able to do what you wanted to, buy some more time, not really to relax but to be able to achieve more than what you do...Because I have this goal and I have to reach it. It's reachable but the amount of work that you have to do, not enough time, I need more time, to just buy something to stop time. Even just for a minute or two. It would make a difference.

Poppy's comments reflect feelings of hurry, stress and pressure in wanting to do more, achieve more but being limited by time. She suggests wanting to "buy more time...even just for a minute or two." In modernity, the discourse of progress has become a marker of advanced-capitalist societies (Bourdieu & Wacquant 2001; Orlikowski & Yates, 2002). The quotes from Poppy and Sandy reflect values and ethos of capitalist modernity in the hurried and pressured way of being that fills their everyday worlds.

Loewan Walker (2014) links a futures-oriented temporality with capitalist constructions of time; i.e. linear and a cumulative movement forward. In the above comment, Poppy is not critical of the pursuit of her goals and expectations; rather, she is critical of the *time* needed to reach them. Each of the above extracts reflects a futures-oriented temporality:

This method [that is, viewing time as having a past, present and future] orients itself towards a set of goals that will remedy the travesties of the past and, in so doing; it remains fixated on the anticipation of a superior future (Loewan Walker, 2014, p. 51).

Participants lived toward the future in a way that cast this future as always more significant than the present moment (Adams, Murphy, & Clarke, 2009). However, when participants engaged in present-oriented discussions, they tended to engage with the themes of family, social connectedness and happiness that were described in Chapter 5. For example, when Patricia talks about her addiction to jigsaw puzzles that afforded a connection with her eldest grandson: "...my eldest grandson keeps buying them for me. And I said, take this one home, it's yours, and he said yes, I will, and he didn't, and I did it, that was very hard." The connection to her grandson enabled through jigsaws was important for Patricia. While these moments were sparse in the interviews overall, they were more common in the conversations with the Over 65s Group.

In the extract below, Patricia, from the Over 65s Group, speaks of how it is no good wanting what you cannot have or what you cannot do. She connects this way of thinking by giving in to the present moment when she says, "You've got to take it as

it comes.” Patricia reflects a present-oriented temporality and suggests a connection between being satisfied with what is available (both immaterial and material) and *being present*.

I’m happy enough, you know. As long as I’ve got my licence I can come up here and go to the shop and do a few things, that’s it. Well it’s no good of wanting to do things you can’t do. You would be very miserable, wouldn’t you? I don’t think you can do that; you’ve got to take it as it comes. It’s not much good of me wanting to fly.

While it may be that this way of thinking is associated with the life stage of the participants, as indicated in life course theory (Elder, 1998; Elder, Johnson, & Crosnoe, 2003), this imagining is significant in regard to questions of sustainability and contrasts to discourses of late-modern capitalism that encourage youth to pursue their dreams via a project of self (Giddens, 1991). In this passage, Patricia suggests that having a sense of what is possible and being satisfied with these possibilities is *more* satisfying than wanting what is not. This perspective reflects sustainability discourses that advocate a positive account of remaining within the limits of present conditions, such as ecological carrying capacities (Norman et al., 2008; Uhl, 2013).

The way participants positioned themselves temporally seemed to link to how they lived in everyday worlds. For the most part, participants were occupied with securing a comfortable future through their activities in the present moment. The present represented a moment in time that was used to serve the proceeding moments to come. While these moments varied across the social groups, in general, there was a similarity in how participants conceived and valued time.

Discourses of sustainability similarly reflect futures-oriented perspectives, forecast environmental conditions, and make claims about important global phenomena such as climate change and population growth, among other things. Yet participants' imaginaries of the future, unlike sustainability discourses, tend to be framed by the concrete remembered experience of the past and lived conditions of the present, and indeed, the relationship between the two. These findings call into question catastrophising discourses, such as discourses of population growth (Ehrlich, 1968; Malthus, [1798] 1970) that extend beyond the living present and minimally connect to everyday worlds.

8.3 Negotiating Futures¹⁸

Futurity refers to the constitution of the future as a domain of moral concern for the present, as described in Chapter 1. The Brundtland definition of sustainable development presents intergenerational needs (questions of futurity) as a priority (Debesay, Nåden, & Slettebo, 2008). Discourses of sustainable development purport that actions of the present are paramount for securing long-term ecological and social futures (Mueller-Vollmer, 1985; Ricoeur, 1984; Wade-Benzoni, Tost, Hernandez, & Larrick, 2012; Wallman, 1992). In this section, I explore how futures were constituted across different social contexts and the ways in which participants engaged in creating futures and argue that social location influences how participants come to form plans for futures.

¹⁸*This section has been adapted from a previously published conference paper:* Beasy, K and O'Dowd, M. (2016). *Negotiating personal and collective futures across diverse social contexts*. Paper presented at the 22nd International Sustainable Development Research Society Conference, Lisbon, Portugal.

The way the future is perceived and imagined influences behaviours in the present. However, research that interrogates the implications of these perceptions has been limited. Studies in health and psychology are exceptions (Aspinwall, 2005; Niemiec, Brown, Kashdan, Cozzolino, Breen, Levesque-Bristol, & Ryan, 2010). I contribute to a growing body of literature that considers people's perceptions of the future with climate change and other wicked problems in this section (Denniss & Davison, 2015; Wolf & Moser, 2011).

Current literature suggests that there are tensions between conceptions of personal selfhood and conceptions of collective responsibility (Denniss & Davison, 2015; Gadamer et al., 2002; Geanellos, 2000; Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005a; Prasad, 2002; Wise, 2014). I expand on this literature to explore negotiations of personal and collective futures across social contexts and argue that the majority of participants in this study did not *feel* that it was their place to envisage collective futures beyond the context of their immediate lives. Where envisaged futures were grounded in the self, issues of global scale were made meaningful and actioned in relation to the participant's life circumstances.

I describe the way that capitalist narratives influenced aspirations for personal futures and suggest that within this way of knowing, insinuated power relations restricted creativity and possibility for envisaging a collective future for many of the participants. For example, participants generally accepted that individuals had ultimate responsibility for their personal futures, and little responsibility for the future of others, except the Middle Class Cohort who did demonstrate some sense of authority for others' futures.

Participants alluded to economic wealth as a precondition for envisaging futures beyond the self. That is, economic capital was seen as a means of legitimate

control over (and commentary about) collective futures. Participants suggested that there were particular fields, such as social networking, that enabled a sense of agency, yet these remained accessible according to socially located conditions. In these spaces, participants were empowered to envisage collective futures and this resulted in positive and creative collective imaginaries.

8.3.1 Money Matters

A theme shared across all groups was an emphasis on economic capital as a precondition to being able to envision a positive future. Sally, from the Over 65s Group, indicates this when she says, “If we haven’t got any money, what can we do without it?” A similar assumption was made in the Mothers’ Group when “the people that have the money” are identified as the ‘others’ who have the capacity to make decisions that affect the collective. These ‘others’ included decisions about the state, services, and societal directions in general. Storied through conversations with participants was a belief that a lack of financial security reduced capacity to participate in activities outside of the private sphere. Patricia, from the Over 65s Group, expressed that when she was younger she wanted to become a politician but had to give much of her time to economic necessities and felt restricted in participating in activities outside of what was essential.

Within neoliberal discourses, economic capital is one of the dominant ways that society is organised (Kerski, Demirci, & Milson, 2013; Liangputtong & Ezzy, 2005b; Schulze, Gryl, & Kanwischer, 2014). Principles of ‘how things should be’ exist in society through organising structures, such as what constitutes ‘work’, that act to order natural and social worlds that over time become recognised as ‘normal’ (Kerski et al., 2013; Liangputtong & Ezzy, 2005b; Schulze et al., 2014). To think and

organize the self and others in economic terms is in the doxa of neoliberal societies, and the hierarchical accumulative principle of economic capital purports that those with more have more authority over societal directions (Kerski et al., 2013). Money, in this sense, is power.

Additional support for the above explanation was shown by the Higher Income Cohort, where economic struggle was less apparent. For example, members suggested that politicians need to be paid more to ‘encourage smart people’. Economic capital was identified by many of the groups as a precondition either to make changes at a collective level or to envision the way forward. Drawing on Bourdieu’s work, the accumulation of economic capital is often used as a vehicle for the accumulation of the necessary social and cultural capital required to operate successfully in a particular field; in this section, I consider the field conceptually as the collective future, that is, the future of the community and the globe more broadly (Bourdieu, 1986; Ireland, Kerr, Lopes, & Nelson, 2006).

Participants recruited through the Neighbourhood House reflected a belief in the established social structures embedded in the society. They assumed that individuals were to defer responsibilities to the structures accepted in the social world to have authority in that space, such as governments and politicians (Janoski, 1998; Schulze et al., 2014). The majority of participants viewed the government, as well as politicians, as the responsible agents for ensuring a collective future. In the next section, I will discuss the way responsibilities were perceived to influence participants’ contributions to envisage and create a collective future.

8.3.2 Social Place and Power

Participants were generally very positive when they discussed personal futures. From across the groups, participants focused on reaching retirement and would often envisage themselves spending more time with family, travelling and being ‘time rich’ which echoes social time conceptualisations in life course theory (Elder, Johnson, & Crosnoe, 2003). The articulation of time in this way was reminiscent of Poppy’s comments when she described her desire to ‘buy time’ to achieve her life aspirations (Thompson, 1967). Ideas that time could be bought, sold, saved and spent, seemed to vary across the lifespan, when participants deliberated their personal futures, but seemed less apparent in conversations about collective futures.

When I asked participants to envisage collective futures, positive imaginaries seemed largely absent, which supports previous research (Hicks & Holden, 1995; Wallman, 1992). Negative perceptions of collective futures are significant in the context of sustainability discourses that use concerns about non-positive futures to communicate with audiences. I problematise the negative projections of futures that are common to sustainability discourses and how these may be encountered in socially located ways.

When questioned about how people were creating a ‘better’ future, responses from the Over 65s Group participant’s suggested that they felt powerless to make any meaningful change for the future. This was illustrated by Patricia and Sherryl during a discussion on the consumption of resources over the next 35 years:

Patricia: What can we do about it?

Sherryl: We can whinge about it...Well you've gotta get up there with 'em [politicians] if you want to have a say. It's no good us really complaining because we're not up there to do anything.

Sherryl suggests later that to make a difference towards mitigating climate change, "we can put a garden in, but that's about all". Here she demonstrates that she believes this is a small contribution and perhaps of little significance ("that's about all", does the work here). Tom goes on to suggest that, "we are complaining about it" as an action, which is said in the context of the group's conversation, but Wendy makes the point that she doesn't believe that their complaints are heard by "the right people [politicians]".

This short extract illustrates how the Over 65s Group participants consider that to personally influence the collective, one must be the right person, or at least be able to speak with and make themselves heard to the right people. The right people, as noted earlier, are viewed as the government and politicians. These were views similarly expressed by participants from the Mothers' Group, the Philippine Group and the Men's Group. Participants demonstrated their 'sense of one's place' and at the same time indicated their 'sense of the other's place' through these statements (Schulze et al., 2014, p. 131). A sense of one's place within a social order encompassed member's conceptualisation of who was responsible for a collective future. "It's this sense of one's place which, in interactions, leads people...that is, 'ordinary people', to keep to their 'ordinary' place...These strategies...may be

perfectly unconscious” (Schulze et al., 2014, p. 128). This was reflected in Patricia’s comment when she talked about running for election:

Interviewer: Why don’t you run as a politician? [Gesturing at Patricia]

Patricia: Oh, I’m too old now! But I wished I had of done in a way. But I got too old before I thought of it.

While the Over 65s Group from the Neighbourhood House discussed issues of broad relevance to society and their personal roles within these; by comparison, the Mothers’ Group held a similar position to members of the Men’s Group and concentrated on issues that were of direct relevance to themselves and their families. They located themselves firmly in notions of family and the local, and questions of what it means to be together and live together, as shown below when members were asked about what they thought issues might be in the future.

Sandy: Less jobs, I reckon there is gunna be less jobs.

Jessie and Heidi: Yeah, less jobs.

Heidi: More, like technology and like more, more, ways and tricks to get people to spend more money on unusable items...I think we have these issues now. But, I think there is more of an opportunity for them to get out of hand.

Jessie: The worrying age of technology. With the phones for examples, you know like, iPhone, iPhone, iPhone.

Sandy: It’s gunna get sneakier how they make you do things.

Jessie: You know, to find ways to make you know to have more technology. Because there will be machines, you can see it now, like at the supermarket

and stuff. Like umm, yeah, you know, like, being able to serve yourself, and mmm, even simply down to tapping your card to pay without having to...

Members of the Mothers' Group reflect a scepticism about the technological change introduced by companies. These ideas converge with much environmentalist critique of technological development and social disempowerment through individualist consumerism, which provides some insight into reasons for disengagement from neoliberal sustainability discourses that promote technological efficiencies, at least for participants in the Mothers' Group (Trentmann, 1996, 2009). These views provide a counterpoint to discourses of sustainability, in particular, sustainable development discourses that promote technological efficiencies as solutions to problems of unsustainability. As outlined in Chapter 2, within sustainable development discourses, the emphasis is placed on finding technological efficiencies and scientific solutions to utilise resources *more sustainably* into the future to enable growth to continue and that working through the issues of ecological crises and problems of unjust development merely requires a continued faith in the scientific rationalism that has enabled progress to date (Hintz, 2003; Plumwood, 2002). Yet, these findings suggest that participants of the Mothers' Group are disempowered by what these changes mean for employment prospects in their everyday worlds.

Participants expressed the injustices felt personally because of the decisions made by the 'other'. The concept of 'other' was identified as a reference to Government and discussed with an implicit acceptance of its role and power. Men's Group participants expressed concerns that the government was 'dictating their lives', identifying injustices between 'white collar' workers who have more opportunities;

for example, when Mike makes the point that, “our [blue collar workers] supers¹⁹ are capped at 24 weeks for our annual income. But there’s no capping on white collar jobs.” At the same time, there was an acceptance of how things are, unfair as they may be. There was an attempt to reconcile these experiences through gestural phrases such as, “well there are people worse off than you, isn’t there?” (Jessie). The focus of Men’s Group participants was on the self and the local while the future of the collective was viewed as the responsibility of the ‘other’. This separation of selfhood from collective futures with differing responsibilities is similarly reflected in neoliberal sustainability discourses outlined in Chapter 2 (Dryzek, 1997; Kerski et al., 2013; Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005b).

Decision making for the future was spoken about as a responsibility of the ‘other’ in the Philippine Group as well. I suggest that participants’ ability to be an ‘active citizen’ was regulated by the capital they had access to and also to the familiarity they had to the field of citizenship (Bourdieu, 1977; 1984). While the participants suggested they had influence over those elected as decision maker, acting as decision maker was outside of what was comfortable or imaginable in their habitus.

In contrast, agency in personal futures were discussed multiple times. For example, Poppy noted that she takes her daughter to swimming lessons to ensure she is prepared for anything (in the context of a conversation on climate change), which suggests issues of global scale are actioned in established and habitual ways that are comfortable and known.

¹⁹ When Mike says “supers”, he refers to superannuation. Superannuation in Australia are arrangements put in place by the Federal Government to enable people in Australia to accumulate funds to provide them with income in retirement. More information is available from: <https://www.ato.gov.au/Individuals/Super/>

Interviewer: So what do you do with the fear [of climate change] that you have...How do you sit with the fear?

Poppy: There will be more high criminal rates. They need to protect themselves! We are preparing them. Put her [daughter] in swimming classes so she can swim! [said jokingly]

This extract suggests that participants were drawn, in the first instance, to personal mitigation strategies, rather than collective responses. Responses were survivalist in mentality, such as preparedness against high crime rates, learning to swim in the face of sea level rise. While these suggestions were offered by Poppy jovially, and most probably, in jest, this indicates that discourses of sustainability have failed to speak meaningfully to her, or to offer practices that are applicable and attuned to her conditions.

The responses that people have to climate change have been the topic of interest in other studies based in Tasmania (Denniss & Davison, 2015; Moore, 2012). Moore (2012) claims that a sense of agency is a necessary attribute of environmental citizens to meet the ongoing commitment of an ecological sustainable society. While the present study did not focus on participants who identified as environmentalists (such as Moore's study of members of the Greens Party), the point that resonates from Moore's (2012) work is that a sense of agency is necessary to effect or to conceive of change (Beasy, Page, Emery, & Ayre, 2016). Participants of the Philippine Group, and similarly the Over 65s Group, believed that they had agency to effect change; however, a meaningful role beyond the voting ballot was unimagined. The following dialogue illustrates how members related to 'the other'.

Emma: Yeah, because the federal government are changing lots of policies and all this issues now that coming together.

Rosa: The government can change!

Fiona: Because we are the government right?

Emma: Yes, but we need to elect another one!

Mary: Hopefully it's a good one. We have the power to change the government.

Emma: It's actually nice here because we can do that. In the Philippines, we can't really do much.

In contrast with other groups, the Higher Income Cohort participants often identified as 'decision maker', evident in the way they referred to themselves ('we') as responsible agents in contrast to the other groups where 'they' (the government and/or people with money) were responsible. When Henry problematises the under-population of Tasmania he says, "so moving into the next 10 years, we have to work out as a state how to get people to come here", which demonstrates his sense of place as 'decision maker'. The resources, goods and powers (for example, occupations with decision making power, friends who are politicians/decision makers) that Henry and other participants in the session draw on, enable the identification with what other groups had defined as 'other'. This was similarly evidenced by Roger when he says,

...the real population problem is replacement for Tasmania and who you are bringing in and looking after population with what we need to do. In some ways, who you bring in, where you put them and what they do becomes important...

Implied in Roger's comment is the necessity for population growth to continue in Tasmania, presumably for the sake of economic growth (as indicated by his reference to *what they do*, that is, what occupation would they be performing). While some sustainability discourses emphasise the need to reduce/control/limit population growth, one interpretation of Roger's remarks affords insights into disengagement from sustainability discourses, in that some people are alienated by claims that there are too many people on the planet.

Roger's comment evidences a contradiction between what this group perceived as necessary for sustainability in this place and in broader discourses of sustainability that advocate for population control. In this sense, the way that population growth is positioned in sustainability discourses may influence the engagement in those discourses by people who value the economic contribution of population growth to economies. In addition, this draws attention to how 'universalising' sustainability discourses can sometimes disengage people when contrasted with locally felt sustainability impacts. Overpopulation discourses, and the panic that comes with them, fail to resonate with people living in a place where the everyday experience is impacted by being under-populated.

In the Higher Income Cohort, participants would demonstrate their sense of place in how they spoke about collective futures. This sense of place tended to encourage creativity in imagining the future. This was illustrated by Winston when he expressed his thoughts on making Tasmania a 'viable' state,

To turn this state around financially, having another under sea bass link cable because we are limited in what we can transfer... Get rid of all the power hungry industry. Just get rid of them. Pay every employee 50/100 thousand to

go on a holiday. You could sell 800 to a billion dollars power down another line every year...

The Higher Income Cohort participants spoke authoritatively, and as decision makers; however, actions that support such talk were rarely mentioned. However, Costas and Grey (2014, p. 931) note that temporality can be used as a subversive attack on disciplinary power; “in cases of imaginary future selves the future provides subjects with a powerful space for constructing their resistant selves.” In this way, I suggest that opportunities to imagine other ways of being in the world may be the first step in bringing such imaginaries into being.

8.4 Time, Temporality and Concepts of Sustainability

How people think about time and how they live in time is influenced by social location, including life stage and social class. Different legitimated logics of practice (Bourdieu, 1990b) were expressed by participants according to life stage – not necessarily associated with age but in how people viewed themselves along socially legitimated trajectories of life. For example, having a young family condoned spending time at home, or being a retiree meant more time socialising with friends. Similarly, accepted and expected logics of practice were influenced by social class. Participants from the Higher Income Cohort had a pronounced appreciation for time as a commodity. In many ways, this was a middle class condition. That is not to say that Neighbourhood House participants did not also see time this way (such as Poppy who wanted to ‘buy time’), though the language of being ‘time poor’ was less developed. In this section, I bring into focus the concepts that have guided my

interpretations of sustainability in this study. How do participants' perceptions of time and temporality influence encounters with sustainability concepts?

8.4.1 Quality of Life

What does time have to do with quality of life and how is this reflected in discourses of sustainability? Time was conceptualised linearly and objectively as well as subjectively by participants in understandings of quality of life. Time was seen to *enable* quality of life and be a marker *of* a quality life at the same time. Participants suggested that a better quality of life was possible when you had more time, or when you had greater agency in how you spent your time. Time was entangled in claims of what makes for a good quality of life. Consistently, participants saw time as an objective and linear measure of quality of life.

In neoliberal sustainability discourses, quality of life is often framed around ideas of improving standards of living (Ede, 2013; Pullinger, 2014). By comparison, sustainability discourses, such as the Slow Food Movement, seek to position the 'problem' of time at the heart of solutions of sustainability (Ede, 2013). Slow Food initiatives challenge production-line models of mass-produced, homogenised food in favour of local, traditional, diverse food cultures. These movements aim to reconnect people with their sources of food and encourage the enjoyment of food as a social experience (Ede, 2013). They seek to address problems of unsustainability by reducing environmental impacts of mass food production and by connecting people to place. Yet, such movements were not reflected in participants narratives of sustainability, which suggests these movements may appeal to some people, such as those with an urban, tertiary educated, middle class habitus, and not others.

In Chapter 2, I argue that discourses of sustainability are largely framed in an environmentalist narrative rather than by speaking to the context of people's lives, including what is seen (and foreseen) to be important in leading a quality life. Ede (2013) proposes that 'time' may be a way of engaging people in questions of sustainability, which findings from this study support. Ede (2013) asks, "what if we framed 'sustainability' as a way to free up people's time, reduce stress, and improve their work-life balance?"

In another way, a contemporary sense of what is 'normal' in the social and cultural organising of life, includes the separation of work from home, which in large part determines how we experience time (Ede, 2013; Hochschild, 1997). Neoliberal sustainability discourses that ask people to 'live sustainably' require them to make a conscious effort to do something different within existing system conditions. Engaging with Bourdieu's (1984) work around making a virtue of necessity, not only is it difficult for people to make changes in their lives because of reinforcing habitus, it is difficult to recognise any need to make change because habitus makes a virtue out of necessity, whatever this necessity may look like. For example, when Sarah from the Higher Income Cohort speaks about her desire to attend pilot school, she positions this career as the *only* choice for her because it is all she can imagine herself doing (flying a plane), which is expressed with the same sense of necessity as when Fiona from the Philippine Group speaks about attending vocational education to update her nursing qualifications. People perceive of quality of life subjectively based upon their context because it is *their* context.

8.4.2 Equity

Connected with ideas of quality of life, concepts of equity denote a questioning of what is ‘just/fair’ between generations of people (intergenerational), and between people, in the same generation (intragenerational). Experiences over time made questions of equity tangible in the everyday worlds of participants. Participants made comparisons of what was equitable, and for whom, using their experiences and knowledge of the past. Time was implicated in participants’ perspectives on issues of equity. Often, situations were viewed as inequitable because of participants’ previous experiences or their knowledge about how things were previously. This has implications for discourses of sustainability that challenge ways of being in everyday worlds, such as eco-consumption discourses described in Chapter 2. For example, participants viewed certain practices as inequitable because of how things were in the past, or how the expectations placed onto individuals was not the same as those for big business. For example, Margaret’s frustrations with changes in the use of reusable shopping bags, questions the fairness of individuals bearing the burden of mass plastic consumption, while supermarkets continue packaging food in plastic-dense ways.

8.4.3 Futurity

Finally, in discourses of sustainability there is an absence of discussion about trajectories of the personal futures of everyday people in everyday worlds (Dryzek, 1997). While there is a lot of attention given to the future of environments and perhaps to societies and populations broadly, imaginaries of the individual life at various life stages and in diverse social and cultural locations remain neglected. Aside from the Over 65s Group, participants in this study spoke at great lengths about their

plans for the future. Why is it that participants do not connect with discourses of sustainability? Could it be that their lives, and possible future lives, are not represented? Are the futures people see themselves working toward visible in discourses of sustainability? Sustainability discourses rarely represent the struggles of people working hard to create futures for their children, including secure food, housing, education, leisure and careers (Conrad, 2012; Dryzek, 1997). Discourses of sustainability tend to focus on collective futures, which as I show in this research, do not reflect how people see themselves in the world. The way that I find people tending to see themselves in the world is mostly set in connection to family or community.

8.5 Summary

This chapter has presented interpretations from the transcripts of how time and temporality influences encounters with questions and concepts of sustainability. I explored the significance of participants' past experiences and significant moments, and I found that these were characterised by their social embeddedness and themes of family, social connection, achievement, happiness and health.

Past experiences are significant in informing how people come to think about and experience concepts of sustainability. I suggest that discourses of sustainability that seek to engage people through experience need to effectively account for the multiple subjectivities and situated knowledges unique to social locations outside of the urban middle class where these discourses are constructed.

The themes I elaborated in Chapter 5 were most prevalent in conversations with participants when they located themselves in the present moment. I found that this positioning was most frequently observed among the Over 65s Group and

connected to a heightened sense of mortality. Actions not perceived as a priority, or not urgent, were postponed until participants said that they would have ‘more time’, which demonstrates a predominantly futures-oriented perspective that influences practices in the present. At the same time, participants were ‘selling their time’ for things they perceived as necessary, rather than taking time for what they suggested they were committed to doing. This reflects a face of alienation under capitalism that Marx²⁰ wrote powerfully about 150 years ago and E.P. Thompson 50 years ago.

I made the case that neoliberal understandings of who is positioned to influence the collective future was symbolised and legitimated through economic capital. I explored participants’ conceptualisations of time in relation to their understandings of equity and futurity, and aspirations for a quality life. In so doing, I showed that socially legitimated assumptions about how time is allocated and used exist in discourses of sustainability.

It has been my intention throughout this thesis to explore how social location influences encounters with concepts relevant to sustainability and encounters with hegemonic sustainability discourses. I spoke with a number of participants from diverse social locations to enable this exploration and have presented my interpretations of their views and perspectives throughout the chapters. In the final chapter, I bring the findings of the study together and consider how they may inform possible responses to problems of unsustainability.

²⁰ Judy Cox (1998) provides a thorough introduction on the key ideas of Marx’s theory of alienation in “An introduction to Marx’s theory of alienation”.

Chapter 9

Conclusion

I began this thesis by referring to my desire to listen to and explore stories of sustainability that were not being told in the sustainability discourses to which I was accustomed. I showed that these sustainability discourses have largely emerged from urban, middle class, and tertiary educated lives, and everyday worlds in advanced-capitalist societies. My research had two objectives, the first, to address this silence in sustainability discourses by exploring how interpretations and experiences of sustainability both reflect and respond to socially located subjectivities, situated knowledges and concerns. I have been particularly interested in exploring how socially located subjectivities inform interpretations and practices relating to what it means to aspire to live sustainably. The second objective, was to set about not only to explore experiences of sustainability across diverse social locations, but also to inquire into how people may feel alienated and become disengaged from hegemonic sustainability discourses.

This thesis makes two significant and original contributions to the scholarship of sustainability. First, I have given an account of sustainability that understands the

aspiration for sustainability as a central, constitutive element of habitus, identity and possibility underlying all social action. By exploring encounters of sustainability in diverse social contexts, my research extends understandings of the importance of situated knowledges in experiences of sustainability (Macnaghten & Urry, 1990; Middlemiss, 2014). Second, my research has brought together spatial and temporal analyses with Bourdieu's theoretical perspective to enable stronger insight into the relation of everyday lives with global concerns and processes, such as those embedded in sustainability discourses. Spatial and temporal analyses provided a means of understanding how discourses of sustainability reflected a middle class habitus (Bourdieu, 1990; Bourdieu & Accardo, 1999; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2001; Soja, 1996). This is a significant contribution, I argue, as sustainability research to date has largely accepted the temporal (futures) and spatial (global/local) positionings implicit to discourses of sustainability.

In this chapter, I return to my research questions and provide an overview of the key outcomes of the research. I highlight the novel and significant contribution my research makes to the field of sustainability and conclude by providing recommendations for further research.

9.1 Answering the Research Questions

My research was underpinned by three research questions:

1. How do people from different social contexts describe/conceptualise concepts of sustainability and how are they embodied in everyday lives?
2. How does social location influence approaches to questions of sustainability?

3. How do people from different social contexts engage with discourses of sustainability?

In this section, I answer each of these research questions before returning to the research objectives..

9.1.1 How do people from different social contexts describe/conceptualise concepts of sustainability and how are they embodied in everyday lives?

Participants in this research spoke of family, social connectedness, happiness, achievement and health as important in constituting what was worthy of sustaining into the future. Participants from the Men's Group, the Mothers' Group, the Philippine Group and the Over 65s Group tended to constitute concepts of sustainability in ways that prioritised short-term concerns related to their personal and their families' immediate needs, such as gaining employment and a good education. By comparison, Higher Income Cohort participant narratives centred on prominent careers and successful business ventures. Yet, all groups were equally driven by the necessities of *their* everyday worlds.

The concepts of sustainability were similar across the social contexts, yet there were nuances in how concepts were embodied, and I argue that they are primarily influenced by participants' particular social locations. In Chapters 5 and 6, I showed that while participants conveyed similar understandings of what was worth sustaining into the future, the way that this was enacted in everyday worlds was reported differently according to social conditions. In Chapter 6, I showed that sustainability practices of participants with a working class habitus include making a virtue of necessity and through doing so, finding satisfaction in the fulfilment of perceived

daily necessities. In comparison, the middle class participants seemed driven by the current economic model in imagining futures, in the sense that ideas and activities were constrained by a need for economic growth.

Within expressions of sustainability concepts, I uncovered multiple conflicting representations (such as public media, social networking, the living present and the role of economic capital in imagining positive futures), related to social location and more broadly across social worlds that influence practices of sustainability. In summary, concepts and practices of sustainability I encountered in each of the different social contexts, represented by the groups I worked with, were performed in ways that reflect and respond to available economic, cultural and social capital. This also influenced how participants came to think about *questions* of sustainability, which was the focus of research question 2.

9.1.2 How does social location influence approaches to questions of sustainability?

Social location influenced how participants conceived questions of sustainability. In responding to this research question, I used relevant spatial and temporal concepts to think about how participants came to conceptualise questions of sustainability. In this framing, I explored how space was a powerful mediator in questions and conceptions of sustainability (primarily addressed in Chapter 7). I argued that people think about problems and challenges of sustainability according to what is experienced as *real* for them according to their location in a web of social and ecological relationships. I found this was reflected in what participants identified as an ‘issue’ for themselves as well as for local and global communities.

In Chapter 8, I argued that concepts of time influenced approaches to sustainability and showed that participants lived predominantly for the future. While having a futures-orientation was found to be a *condition* of the middle class habitus, thinking about possible personal futures influenced how all participants set goals and aspirations for their lives. Consequently, present moments tended to be lived *through* rather than lived *for*, which I argue presents tensions for discourses of sustainability that seek to engage people in practices in the here-and-now that do not contribute to their aspirations for the future.

9.1.3 How do people from different social contexts engage with discourses of sustainability?

Discourses of sustainability evoke particular imaginaries relating to what it is to be sustainable and to live sustainably. This research is premised on the idea that these discourses are located in particular socio-cultural contexts that may not be applicable or relevant to other social locations. Responding to research question 3, I explored interpretations and encounters of sustainability from people beyond the urban, tertiary educated, middle class where sustainability discourses have originated, and found that participants were predominantly disengaged from these ideas and related discussions about sustainability. I found that the problems of unsustainability articulated in sustainability discourses tended not to reflect the issues that were brought into conversation by participants, particularly those whose lives are fashioned with/within a working class habitus. Instead, I found participants connected with issues that implicated their immediate social and ecological relationships in some way.

In the research, I uncovered a number of reasons why participants disengage from sustainability discourses including the way that often, their lives are represented as villainous and ‘the problem’ in sustainability discourses (outlined in Chapter 2). Sustainability discourses suggest that individuals need to be doing more (or less, in the case of consuming), or doing differently in the context of solving problems of unsustainability. Yet, participants articulated exasperations with how they were already doing their best to create comfortable lives for themselves and their families within their social conditions and with their available resources. In this sense, they suggested that they were incapable of doing any more than what they were already doing. Regardless of social location, it seemed that participants were more or less consumed by the necessities of their everyday worlds and that meeting these needs left little time or space for engaging with, or responding to, hegemonic discourses of sustainability.

Second, the practices advocated for in sustainability discourses were found to be a source of alienation for some participants. For example, participants were critical of the intent of companies that encouraged eco-consumer practices. This was best exemplified in Chapter 6 by Margaret from the Mothers’ Group when she spoke about how she described feeling hurt and unfairly blamed by supermarkets in their request to bring shopping bags from home. What Margaret describes, resonates with individualising discourses of sustainability which place the responsibility of sustainability practice onto individuals, which deflect the responsibility away from the corporations that produce consumerist imperatives. These individualising practices speak to larger questions of how sustainability discourses act to responsibilise individuals in ways that, for some, appear unfair. These sentiments reflect the concerns of Žižek (2009) in his claims that eco-consumption and similar discourses

are attempts to ‘divert’ attention from the ‘actual’ problems in society. Žižek’s position may be a generative place to start to open up dialogical spaces with people whose experiences resonate with such provocations and afford a deep critique of sustainability as a political discourse. Participants, for example Heidi, challenged individualisation through actions that reflected community responsibility and through conversations that centred on family aspiration and collective successes. Finally, not only did the environmental, ecological and global framings prevalent in discourses of sustainability fail to connect with participants whose experiences of necessity were most bound to local contexts; but after further analysis of the discourses, they appear, in many ways, to be effectively designed to disconnect and to marginalise.

9.2 Contribution of this Research

The findings of this research provide a range of insights and implications for sustainability scholarship, particularly for advocates seeking to engage a larger population in the social pursuit of sustainability. As discussed in Chapter 2, sustainability discourses have largely emerged from advanced-capitalist societies representing middle class, tertiary educated and urban perspectives and there is little inclusion of the experiences of sustainability from spaces outside of this narrow range of social fields. My research has explored how interpretations and experiences of sustainability are reflected in, and responsive to, socially located, situated knowledges and provides evidence of the nuanced understandings and practices within these contexts. Specifically, it has explored and developed *affective* interpretations of sustainability (see Chapter 5), which I argue is an underdeveloped area within sustainability scholarship (as discussed in Chapter 2). Yet, findings from this research suggest that these aspects, including family, social connectedness, achievement,

health and happiness are central to participants' lives through the interactions they have with people and place.

An implication of these findings for broader sustainability scholarship and practice is in the recognition of nuanced interpretations and practices of people *in* place(s). For too long sustainability has been an abstract aspiration owned by powerful actors in society. Understanding how sustainability is already embodied in the situated knowledges of people and communities holds potential for policy makers and sustainability advocates to embrace and adapt ways of thinking and being. At the same time, my findings suggest that many people are already attuned to creating conditions that enable their lives, and those of their families, to be sustainable. Linking into these established aspirations and values in meaningful and socially located ways could see greater uptake of discourses *for* sustainability as well as democratisation to challenge the dogmas of sustainability so that everyone can find a space in the discourses. In making such a shift, more people may see themselves reflected in sustainability discourses and experience sustainability as a concept or discourse that they are part of, moving away from sustainability as something apart *from* daily lives, and towards sustainability as something *embedded in* daily worlds.

9.2.1 Sustainability as a Central Component of Habitus

My research has sought to explore the ways that aspirations for sustainability exist in social locations that are seemingly disengaged from sustainability discourses. In so doing, I have given an account of sustainability that understands the aspiration of sustainability as a central component of habitus, or the embodied social practices enacted by individuals in particular social locations. Sustainability discourses often

purport aspirations for sustainability in ways that are disconnected from the complexity of everyday lives and everyday decisions of different worlds.

Findings suggest that if sustainability advocates appreciate and respect that sustainability is central to people's ways of being, this may afford a different perspective for engaging people in transformative agenda for, and conversations about sustainability. In other words, sustainability discourses, I argue, should become more attuned to the nuances and affordances of different social, economic and cultural geographies in which they are necessarily enacted. By accepting and recognising sustainability as a central component of habitus, we (sustainability scholars and advocates) have the potential to change the conversation and to widen the practice, in the process, building a stronger and more diverse political consensus for transformation informed by this ideal. In this sense, conversations could be about exploring how sustainability exists in located ways and supporting the practices that exist already. This may mean asking different questions: for example, how can the complexity of people's lives be reflected and appreciated in sustainability discourses? And how is this complexity ignored, marginalised and misunderstood in the class-based discourses and practices that gather around the word sustainability? Understanding sustainability as a central component of habitus means thinking in new ways about what is sustainable in different social locations, in ways that speak to local contexts and in ways that are empathetic to the everyday worlds of diverse groups of people; this includes a recognition of the different resources available to differently located social actors.

9.2.2 Methodological Innovations: Deepening Interpretations of Sustainability with Habitus

Employing habitus in this project enabled analysis that was sensitive to cultural, social and economic conditions that act to inform encounters with the theory and practice of sustainability in everyday worlds. While habitus has a constitutive effect on individuals, equally, it is creative, transformative and innovative in socially located ways (Bourdieu, 1990). The interpretations of sustainability concepts made by participants reflected habitus and at the same time, operated as *a part of* habitus. As such, the concept reflects agency as well as structural constraint.

Rethinking interpretations and understandings of sustainability in this way has implications for sustainability discourses, particularly those transposed across contexts and where different discourses and ways of being in the world are at play. In working with habitus, I drew attention to the spatial and temporal complexities that exist in socially located ways. In so doing, I suggest sustainability advocates should be cautious in implicitly valuing certain ways of seeing over others.

In my analysis, I deepened spatial conceptualisations of habitus with Soja's trialectic of spatiality. In so doing, I was able to develop a theoretical framework that recognised located socio-cultural conditions in the way participants *perceived* the everyday world and *conceived* of power relations and dominating ideologies operating in these worlds. This meshing of space into an analysis of habitus was important to illuminate the ways that people think about their positioning in the world and about everyday happenings in their worlds.

9.3 Opportunities for Further Research

My research was limited to exploring how sustainability was interpreted and embodied in five social locations in and around one small city in Australia. As such, I focused on exploring how habitus influences approaches to sustainability in located ways. I also focused on unpacking how these people were both disengaged from sustainability discourses and yet engaged with many of the animating concerns that fuel these discourses. I did this from the position of a privileged, white, female sustainability advocate and scholar. This positionality necessarily informed the interpretations I made and the ways in which I was able to understand and interpret the perspectives that participants shared with me. I am also conscious of the absence of perspectives in my research. In particular, the absence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander conceptions of sustainability. These limitations open up opportunities for further research, as I outline below. My suggestions for further research are also influenced by a number of questions that emerged during my data collection and analysis, but which were too far outside the scope of my research for me to answer. These include:

- What are the implications of valuing practices of sustainability that are not common to hegemonic discourses of sustainability?
- How can sustainability advocates use understandings of socially located practices of sustainability in ways that propel democratic transitions towards sustainability that achieve collective goals while respecting social diversity?

- How can discursive framings of and practical agenda-setting for sustainability be more inclusive of multiple subjectivities as well as social locations?

With these limitations and questions in mind, I suggest below several research projects that could extend on the ideas contained in this thesis:

- A project that explores conceptions of sustainability from a greater diversity of perspectives. In particular, the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander conceptions and practices of sustainability with a focus on what this might suggest for non-indigenous people.
- An action research project that focuses on building sustainability practice in ways that are sensitive to situated knowledges. In this way, recognising and appreciating that what ‘is sustainable’ will be different in different situations. A project of this kind would embrace participants-as-leaders in establishing what practices are sustainable and work in ways that support and promote participant-as-leader solutions.
- A project that places temporal orientation at the heart of sustainability practice. Such a project would investigate how changes in present mind/future mind orientations influences practices of sustainability.
- A discourse analysis of meta-narratives of advanced-capitalist societies to identify tensions in these narratives with sustainability concepts. Such a study could also uncover opportunities for re-defining and re-aligning what it means to be-in-the-world today living with flexible yet robust sustainability concepts.

9.4 Concluding Remarks

The overarching goal of my research has been to explore how sustainability is understood and made meaningful across different contexts. My original concern was that sustainability discourses are developed by and for the urban, tertiary educated, middle class, and consequently, they may not engage or speak to people outside of this social location. Findings of the research suggest similarities in participants' understandings of concepts important to sustainability, including a common focus on family, connectedness, health, happiness and achievement. However, there were differences in how these concepts were lived and made meaningful in the lives of individual participants. Yet there were also some similarities between participants with similar social locations.

My research offers possible opportunities for sustainability advocates to establish nuanced understandings of how to engage with diverse subjectivities in meaningful ways. In this sense, my research has sought to extend understanding in sustainability scholarship about the 'nature' of subjectivity and how we, as sustainability scholars, can be responsive to difference in future conversations. At the same time, I have shown that sustainability scholars are implicated in shaping the identities of others through discursive formulations of sustainability discourses and that this is something that needs to be taken on with great responsibility. Equally, my research suggests a need for scholars to intentionally work against singular interpretations, and to deconstruct ideas of sustainability and to explore how these work in everyday worlds.

Some final words. I have argued that people in general are represented as villains by discourses of sustainability and that this in part explains why they may be

alienated or disengaged from sustainability issues and movements. Moreover, individuals often cannot see themselves within the discourses that exist ‘out there’, in some other place, for some other people, nor are sustainability discourses readily digestible or relatable outside of selective social locations and that these conditions are problematic. It seems that relatable imaginaries within sustainability discourses are lacking. What is it that individuals and their collectives, are meant to be aspiring for? Economic growth and the neoliberal narratives of progress are tangible and connectable stories. What is the story of sustainability? To ‘get back to nature’? To reduce, reuse, recycle? To live in a world that is just? What are the tangible narratives within discourses that people are able to grab hold of and visualise their lives in? To a large extent, these are some of the questions that my thesis has been wrestling with.

First and foremost, I suggest that hegemonic sustainability imaginaries should not paint people as villainous; rather, they should appreciate that people are just trying to survive in the conditions in which they exist – is that not what we are all doing? And yet, sustainability discourses tell a story of this not being enough. At the same time, these discourses suggest that people’s everyday lives are in some way wrong. That *they*, and *their* practices are to blame for the terrible state of conditions that this thing called sustainability somehow commits to addressing. Solutions then, are cast onto the individual often ignoring the social structures and contexts in which individuals find themselves. It is the individual that is ‘responsibilised’ to solve the problems of unsustainability, which as evident in Margaret’s cries of injustice regarding the banning of plastic bags in supermarkets, are met with great resistance.

Informed by my findings in this thesis, I question whether exclusive and exclusionary sustainability discourses are actually sustainable and would argue that more diversity in the way that sustainability discourses position what counts ‘as

sustainable' is needed. In fact, sustainability scholars would do well to shift thinking from 'sustainability' toward understandings of 'sustainabilities' (Agyeman, Bullard, & Evans, 2003), as a way to recognise and legitimise discursively, the multiplicity in approaches that necessarily exist in encounters of sustainability.

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Appendix A

Recruitment Poster

**You and the Future:
Social, Environmental and
Economic Futures**
How does the future shape your everyday life?



*Come and join in a group conversation with
around 10 people over morning/afternoon tea.*

For more information or to get involved, please contact Kim on...
Phone: TBA
Kim.Beasy@utas.edu.au



**UNIVERSITY of
TASMANIA**

*Kim is a PhD student with
the Faculty of Education*

Appendix B

Consent Form (Focus Group)



FACULTY OF EDUCATION

You and the Future: Social, Environmental and Economic Futures

Participant Statement of Consent to participate in a group conversation

1. I agree to take part in the research study named above.
2. I have read and understood the Information Sheet for this study.
3. The nature and possible effects of the study have been explained to me and I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction.
4. I understand that the study involves a group discussion/focus group of approximately 1h duration that will be audio-recorded.
5. I understand that participation does not involve any specific risk to me as a participant as any material I provide will be treated as confidential and anonymous.
6. I understand that other participants in the group will be asked to keep what we talk about private, but this cannot be assured.
7. I understand that I need to keep what we talk about private to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of other participants.
8. I understand that all information will be securely stored on the University of Tasmania's premises for at least five years from the completion of the study, and will then be destroyed
9. I understand that any information I supply to the researchers will be used only for the purposes of the research.
10. I understand that the results of the study will be published so that I cannot be identified as a participant.
11. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without any effect.

If I so wish, I may request that any data I have supplied be withdrawn from the research until 30th September 2016.

Participant's name:

Participant's signature:

Date: _____

Statement by Investigator

☐

I have explained the project and the implications of participation in it to this volunteer and I believe that the consent is informed and that he/she understands the implications of participation.

If the Investigator has not had an opportunity to talk to participants prior to them participating, the following must be ticked.

☐

The participant has received the Information Sheet where my details have been provided so participants have had the opportunity to contact me prior to consenting to participate in this project.

Investigator's name:

Investigator's signature:

Date: _____

Appendix C

Interview Schedule (Focus Group)

Descriptive starting questions:

What are likely to be some of the most important issues facing Tasmania in 2025?

What are likely to be the most important issues in the World in the 2nd half of this century?

What will life be like in your town/suburb/region in 2100?

Then segue into some of the questions below...

Question	Rationale
In what ways is life different to life 30 years ago?	Do people consider that life is better than before? (habitus)
How would everyone think about the future of the next generation? And the future of the generation after that? Follow up question – How far ahead would everyone plan into the future? Follow up question - Does this have any impacts on the now?	Awareness of the future
Has anyone here heard people say Tassie is facing major social challenges at the moment? Yeah? Again it is one of those things you hear people say. Has anyone here heard this? Do you want to share what you have heard and perhaps what you think about it? (similar approach to asking about economic challenges and environmental challenges)	Perceived environmental stewardship (habitus)
I have heard people use the word 'environment', perhaps you have too. Sometimes I am not sure of what this may mean. Has anyone here a view of what 'environment' means? Obviously it can mean lots of things and there is no right or wrong. Anyone got any thoughts?	Anthropocentrism (cultural capital)
Another word I've heard people use is 'sustainability', perhaps you have as well. Anyone got any thoughts on this one?	Perceptions and interpretation of dominant terminology (social/cultural capital)

Appendix D

Demographic Survey

Thankyou for participating in this research project. This survey is completely voluntary. It is estimated that this survey will take 5 minutes to complete. You WILL NOT be identifiable based on any of the information you provide in this survey.

Please tick the box if you consent to answering the questions below.

☐

Gender

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Other

Which category below includes your age?

- ☐ 18-29
- ☐ 30-39
- ☐ 40-49
- ☐ 50-59
- ☐ 60 or older

Do you identify as being from a culturally and linguistically diverse background?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Do you identify as:

- ☐ Non-Indigenous Australian
- ☐ Aboriginal Australian
- ☐ Torres Strait Islander Australian
- ☐ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australian
- ☐ Other: Please specify_____

What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?

- ☐ Primary school
- ☐ Grade 7-9
- ☐ Grade 10
- ☐ Grade 11
- ☐ Grade 12
- ☐ Bachelor Degree
- ☐ Vocational certificate
- ☐ Postgraduate

Which of the following categories best describes your employment status?

- ☐ Studying and NOT employed
- ☐ Studying and employed part time
- ☐ Employed, working 40 or more hours per week
- ☐ Employed, working 1-39 hours per week
- ☐ Not employed, looking for work
- ☐ Not employed, NOT looking for work
- ☐ Retired

Which of the following categories best describes your combined household income?

- ☐ \$10,000 - \$29,999
- ☐ \$30,000 - \$49,999
- ☐ \$50,000 - \$69,999
- ☐ \$70,000 - \$89,999
- ☐ \$90,000 - \$109,999
- ☐ \$110,000 - \$129,999
- ☐ \$130,000 - \$149,999
- ☐ \$150,000 or more
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

What best describes your living arrangement?

- ☐ Owned or mortgage
- ☐ Renting
- ☐ Other: Please specify_____

Which of the following best describes your current relationship status?

- ☐ Married/defacto
- ☐ Widowed
- ☐ Divorced/separated
- ☐ Single

How many children age 17 or younger live in your household?

- ☐ None
- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ More than 4



Appendix E

Consent Form (Semi-structured Interview)



FACULTY OF EDUCATION

You and the Future: Exploring Social, Environmental and Economic Futures

Participant Statement of Consent

1. I agree to take part in the research study named above.
2. I have read and understood the Information Sheet for this study.
3. The nature and possible effects of the study have been explained to me and I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction.
4. I understand that participation involves does not involve any specific risk to me as a participant as any material I provide will be treated as confidential and anonymous.
5. I understand that all information will be securely stored on the University of Tasmania's premises for at least five years from the completion of the study, and will then be destroyed
6. I understand that any information I supply to the researchers will be used only for the purposes of the research.
7. I understand that the results of the study will be published so that I cannot be identified as a participant.
8. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without any effect.
9. If I so wish, I may request that any information I have supplied be withdrawn from the research until 30th September 2016.

Please tick if you agree to participate in any or all of the following activities:

Semi-structured Interviews

10. I understand that the study involves a face to face interview of 1-2 h duration that will be audio-recorded.

Yes

☐

Participant's name:

Participant's signature:

Date:

Statement by Investigator

☐

I have explained the project and the implications of participation in it to this volunteer and I believe that the consent is informed and that he/she understands the implications of participation.

If the Investigator has not had an opportunity to talk to participants prior to them participating, the following must be ticked.

☐

The participant has received the Information Sheet where my details have been provided so participants have had the opportunity to contact me prior to consenting to participate in this project.

Investigator's name:

Investigator's signature:

Date:

Appendix F

Interview Schedule (Semi-structured Interview)

What does a quality or good, fulfilling life mean for you? What does this look like?

What is important to you? Do you feel like you have enough time for these things?

What is one thing that does or you think would make your life easier or better?

What do you hope your future will look like in another 40 years?

Can you think of some kind of task or practice that hasn't changed significantly since the 1950s?

What does community mean for you? Is it important? Why/why not?

What do you do to relax? Has this changed? Is it important? Do you think we are better for these changes?

What is our role in looking after the environment, do we have one?

What is our role in the climate change/global warming stuff?

Do you compare your life with others? Can you give me an example?

How do you think your quality of life compares to others in Australia? And out of Australia?

What are some of the significant or defining moments that you can recall in your life so far?

What do you do to be 'sustainable' or to make a difference?

Appendix G

Initial Codes identified during first cycle coding

Social Structures	Important to the Individual
<i>Government</i>	<i>Security</i>
<i>They</i>	<i>Social connection</i>
<i>Agency</i>	<i>Loneliness</i>
<i>Media</i>	<i>Place</i>
Futurity	<i>Family</i>
<i>Negative</i>	<i>Children</i>
<i>Positive</i>	<i>Health</i>
<i>Collective</i>	<i>Values</i>
<i>Personal Preparation</i>	<i>'Time for ourselves'</i>
<i>Saving money</i>	<i>Death</i>
<i>Personal</i>	Perspectives
<i>Goals</i>	<i>Mindset change</i>
<i>Maintaining status quo</i>	<i>Ontology</i>
<i>adaptive</i>	<i>Past as precedence</i>
Environmental Challenges	<i>Technological determinism</i>
<i>Weather</i>	<i>Cognitive dissonance</i>
<i>Climate Change</i>	<i>Us against them</i>
<i>Rubbish and Recycling</i>	Jobs
<i>Pollution</i>	Equity
<i>Cleanliness</i>	Retirement
<i>Solar Power</i>	Social challenges
Technology	The word environment
Balance	The word sustainability
Env = Economic gain	Population
Religion	Refugees
Parental influence	Materialism
authoritative voice	Happiness